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Arden

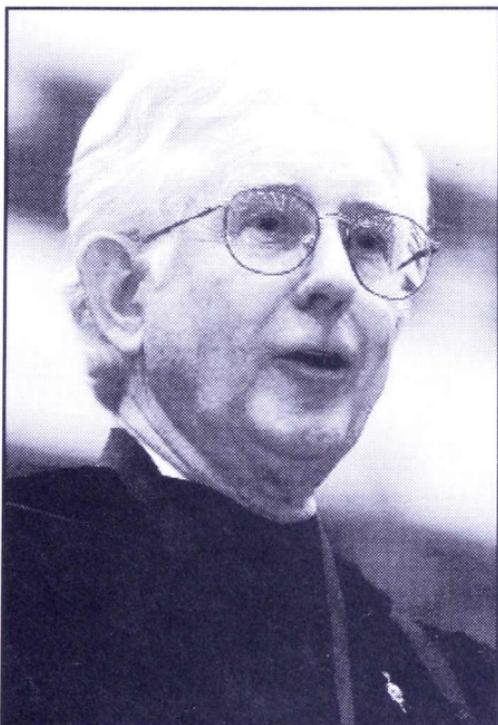
Volume X
Spring 2008



Dedication

Dr. Frank Brown

Columbus State University President 1988-2008



After twenty years of service, Dr. Brown will say goodbye to CSU this June. Through his leadership, the school has taken unprecedented strides to become the established, respected university that it is today. For his dedication to the growth and prosperity of our school, the *Arden* staff dedicates this book to him.

Thank you, Dr. Brown.

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Table of Contents

Incarceration Catharsis	12-14	Lori Hinkley
Ashley	15	Justin Hadley
Heather in Pictures	16	John Phillips
Want Some?	17	Amy Reed
How to Tell a Love Story in		
One Minute	18-19	Kevin Ramirez
Thinspiration	20	Holly Matthews
Chicken Killer Number 2	21	Sheena Baker
Defining the Imperfect	22-26	Kristin Taylor
Erosion	27	Christen Anne Holloway
iLongo	28	Neal Jordan
Equivocal Topology	29	Carey Scott Wilkerson
Warning to Dog Owners		
North of Kentucky	30	John Summerfield
French Quarter Reflection	31	Reagan L. Grimsley
Taxicab Dreams	32-36	Jessica R. McCallister
Union Station	37	Jenny Ross
Haiku in F# Minor	38	Franklin Dillard II
Pinsky Reads to a Southern Girl	39	Crystal Jenkins Woods
Love is for the Birds	40-41	Chace Webb
Blue Boy	42	Stacy Tsui
Firestuffs	43	Chelsea Bullock
Sticks and Stones	44-49	Miranda Baras
Hand	50	Matthew Farina
She Sleeps in Loess Bluffs	51	Beth Spencer
Untitled	52	Jill Tankersley
Italy	53	Justin Hadley
Valarie	54-55	Lindsay Millet
Lil' Blue Devil	56	Franklin Dillard II
Blissful Discomfort	57	Lauren Wertz
Cameo Birds	58	Addie Hughes Newcomer
Nesting 2	59	Addie Hughes Newcomer
iSolation	60-61	Chelsea Bullock
The Gaze	62	Neal Jordan
Annie in the Summer	63	Lori Hinkley
Empty Wine Cellar	64	Molly Mitchell
Holding Hands	65	Molly Mitchell
Kitchen	66	Evelyn Nicole Kirksey
Inheritance	67	Sheena Baker
Life, Abrupt	68-76	Kevin Ramirez

	Untitled	77	Katarina Garcia
Pensive Boogieboarding		78	Reagan L. Grimsley
Understatement		79	Anna Dunson
Silly Goofball Poets	80-81		John Phillips
Bianca	82		Justin Hadley
Neshama Kaddish	83		Erick Richman
Outmaneuvered	84		Crystal Jenksins Woods
Lab Panel, Icarus Volume 1	85		Franklin Dillard II
I Was Drunk in New York City	86		Chelsea Bullock
geology 1121	87		Chelsea Bullock
Morpheus and the Fatal Dream	88		Erin King
Dishwater	89		Shannon Williamson
Oaks	90		Lauren Wertz
Broad Street, Oxford	91		Lauren Wertz
Love Poem for Walter Anderson	92		Beth Spencer
Orbis	93		Jenny Ross
Untitled	94		Holly Matthews
The Persistence of Vision	95		Lori Hinkley
L'Enfant du Monde	96		Willie Pace
DOF	97		Neal Jordan
Untitled	98		Justin Hadley
Nostalgia	99		Kristin Taylor
Pinkie	100		Stacy Tsui
Death in Manhattan	101-104		Jessica R. McCallister
Dalavinci	105		Franklin Dillard II
Wedding Day	106		Matthew Farina
Connection	107		John Summerfield
First Aid	108		Sheena Baker
Confederate Jasmine	109		Evelyn Nicole Kirksey
Shattered	110		Holly Matthews
Last Night I Went to Dinner	111		Crystal Jenkins Woods
For Lorleen, Who Now Lives in Her Truck	112		Beth Spencer
A Haunting Tour of New Orleans	113		Reagan L. Grimsley
Unity	114		Neal Jordan
Zen Gardens	115		John Phillips
To a Certain Nature Poet	116		John Summerfield
Icarus and His Odyssey	117		Franklin Dillard II
Counting on Death	118		Lori Hinkley
Bathroom	119		Justin Hadley
The Water Boils	120		Matt Conley
You Can't Sleep Through Every Storm	121		Matt Conley

Cover Art

Keys to Salvation

Stacy Tsui

(Front Cover)

Mass Effect

Neal Jordan

(Back Cover)

Kocian Awards

Ashley

Best of Art

Justin Hadley

Heather in Pictures

Best of Poetry

John Phillips

Incarceration Catharsis

Best of Prose

Lori Hinkley

Incarceration Catharsis

Lori Hinkley

When I was a young girl growing up in Texas in that most unbridled and excess-driven decade called the 80's, there was an annual event my family and I looked forward to every year. It was called the Texas Prison Rodeo. Sure, it sounds like a bad idea – mean, inmates and bulls – but what it represented was far more than any one girl could possibly fathom at the time. I wish I could recount the details of eight magical seconds that changed my worldview and made me the person I am today, but to be quite honest, I never cared much about the steers and horses. No, to me, it was a day every fall that I could watch the inmates in their natural habitat while imagining the life they might have had outside those stolid walls. One might even compare it to the eighteenth century British habit of visiting those confined to Bedlam. But that was such an unspeakable manifestation of human behavior, wasn't it?

For me, there was no better part of the day than after the "good guys" had gotten bucked around, thrown in the dirt, and collected their annual cheers and, for the lucky ones, cash. Although, luck could also mean he simply came out of the ring alive, un-gorged, unbroken, and unbeaten by the likes of Thrasher or Big Willy. While the dust was softly settling in a fine layer over everything the wind could carry it to, I would jump up from the make-do stands and quickly urge my family into the brick building that housed those who chose not to participate in the rodeo in the traditional way. Those inmates were the ones who either did not have a clean slate of behavior or who were too smart to face a pissed off bull. These were the ones I came to see. There in their cages, they served as physical examples of the kind of man I was to stay away from. These dangerous, criminal, might-grab-you-if-you-get-too-close men were the reasons Octobers couldn't come quick enough for me.

My fascination with these men began developing a year



or two earlier when I finally convinced my mother to throw down ten bucks for the small paperback book that would change my life forever. It was prison poetry – poetry unlike any I had ever read before. It was poetry that made me want to read poetry. It was poetry written by those who had holes in their souls and hearts in need of mending, and who operated in a world where rules and consequences were only words. Inside the prison walls I could meet the writers. Real living poets.

I read every line, every poem, memorized every drawing, and mouthed every inmate's name until I could recite the first few lines and the author by heart. It was disturbing, but I didn't know better at the time. More gut-twisting moments came from the words penned in those cells than from the tossed cowboys in the rodeo ring. The melody of prison blues and human incapacitation spilled out in iambic pentameter spoke to me in a way no textbook ever did.

I came to the conclusion that poetry could only be written by someone who had it tough. Someone who had a life that pressed their soul so hard the only way out was through the pen – ink pen, not bull pen. I began to fill in the blanks of their stories, and to imagine lives so twisted and evil that captivity became the only form of redemption. I daydreamed about what could make a man fire two shots into his wife, go out to the bar for a drink, and come back home to dismember her body. That was page 32. I tried to understand what sense could come from recounting in vivid detail the horrors a young boy withstood as a child, and ultimately his own sins.

Soon, I became immersed in the world of criminals, studying in intimate detail their words. I had to see these men again and again. It didn't matter if the inmate I came face to face with in Huntsville was Rick "Red Blood" Jenkins, who wrote a poem about plucking the petals from a flower, or if it was just inmate number 1244067. They all became one to me. I desperately needed to know these men actually existed. I needed to understand how a man with such pretty outsides could harbor



something so ugly on the inside, and the only way to do that was to get close enough to see the pearlescence of his teeth. I'd drag my reluctant parents to the poetry readings, and hang on every word. These poets were on display for me. They were hawking their books for me. I'd stand in the audience of a question and answer session after a reading and whisper, "What makes you so sad, Mr. Jenkins? Who hurt you?" But the speaker would never answer. He would only continue his labored speech, sitting stolidly behind the desk, shackled ankles peeking out from the bottom of white cotton trousers two sizes too big. As I got older, I noticed that the inmates would smile a bit more at me, but I still never got the answers to my questions.

So, year after year, I waited out the bucking and the racing just to rush inside to get a closer look at truly broken men. Each year there were new faces, but their stories never changed. No number of lines could ever describe their anger, their fractured adolescence, their broken psyches. No volumes of books could ever contain their damage. No bars could ever keep them from digesting their own innate (or cultivated, for some) malevolence and regurgitating it into perfectly crafted meter. I came to understand these men, not through their words, but by looking into each cell and locking eyes with the incarcerated.

Though the poets were not fit to ride away into the sunset, butt firmly situated in saddle, tipping their hats to the cheers of a society that had cast them aside, they were once-a-year-heroes, too. And even though they were mere shells of men with nothing on the inside – no conscience, no heart, no passion, no moral compass, no ability to distinguish reality from the fantasy world they had created – it was what they could create on the outside that mattered. Their meter and verse are forever branded on my memory. They taught me that poetry doesn't have to be pretty and perfect. It only has to be real.



Ashley
Justin Hadley



Heather in Pictures

John Phillips

She has a voice like
cold silver grazing bare skin;
it's an absinthe sound.
And that whispering, airy
quality: feathers on glass.

Her hair, shadow black,
a university of
trellises low and
steel in the moon, her eyes a
shattering of icicles.

We made, and toasted,
and leaned on that frail purpose
like toads, tongues firing,
flames welling up from beneath
our seats: this was outside time.

Then I was laid back
in her flame, her orange Oz,
and she swam around
me like a pretty yellow
hurricane; I was water.

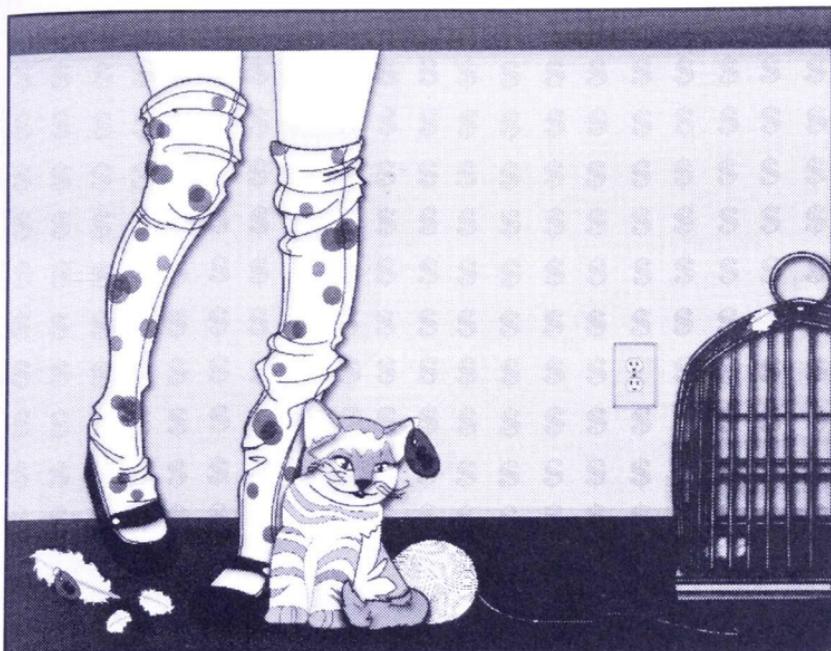
But our dearest walls
for timid tired held fast,
those grasping fingers
retreating coolly, the world
spinning as bees round our eyes.

So we sing shiny
and so falls flesh, and when we
grow tired like old
mushrooms, and stare through windows
between dreams, we have only
the blank page, awaiting, calmly.



Want Some?

Amy Reed



How to Tell a Love Story in One Minute

Kevin Ramirez

It takes just one minute to realize that a soft, unnoticeable drizzle has evolved into an afternoon downpour. The rain from a black sky pelts against the window and rattles the gutters. It makes her close her eyes and become immersed in the hypnosis of the drumming drops. I watch her lie back on the bed and arch her spine. I start to move, but hesitate, allowing my eyes to follow her slow undulations. I am drawn toward her, my body aching to join her in the blanket. My feet, sticky against the hardwood, lead the way.

It takes just one minute to find her irresistible again. The way her lips open, lazy and habitual, knowing – no – feeling the feral thoughts grinding inside me. I want to speak, but my throat locks closed in lust. I lean down over her. I bring my lips to hers and she kisses me – perfect and genuine. My eyes fall closed as my lips, separate from the commands of my mind, press harder against hers. Her movements match mine, mouth parting and tongue darting.

It takes just one minute to realize that she's asleep. I don't have to open my eyes to tell. Her breath pushes into my mouth, wavelike, oceanic even. Pulsing in metronomic rhythm. Her chest rises, her breasts pressing into my stomach, then falls, leaving fine spots of sweat where our contact lingered. I climb in the bed, lie on top of her, and open my eyes. Her hands, half open, violet polish chipping from her nails, lie on both sides of her head. I try to smile, but almost forget how.

It takes just one minute to immerse myself in memory. I found her in Greenwood Park. She wore a peach sundress. I could almost see through it, through the airiness of the fabric. We danced in the emptiness of her apartment amid boxes and bare walls. We made love for the first time in the very bed I lay in, panting in hushed voices. The sheets tangled, snakelike, as they are now. The rain grows louder, pounding against the glass of the window behind the bed.

It takes just one minute to finally understand, to at last accept the necessity of telling her. I reach an epiphany, a steadily expanding desire to wake her, to cup her face in my hands, to mouth the three words that my heart throbs each day. I call the words out everyday in my head while I listen to her hum as she cooks. I want to breathe on the glass covering our picture and



write the words into the moist fog. I reach my hand out to shake her shoulder, but I stop. My hand hovers over her heart.

It takes just one minute to find paper and a pen. I climb out of bed and walk to the balcony. I spread the paper out against the glass of the French doors, where rain beats, cold and relentless, against the other side of the clearness. My hand moves wildly to keep up with my mind. The words fall as steadily as the droning rain, as her soft, snoring breath, as my thumping heartbeat. Within a minute, I am holding the screams of my heart, captured on white, lined paper, vocalized by ballpoint ink. Most importantly, I've finally said the three words that have been creeping around in my head and rattling in my heart.

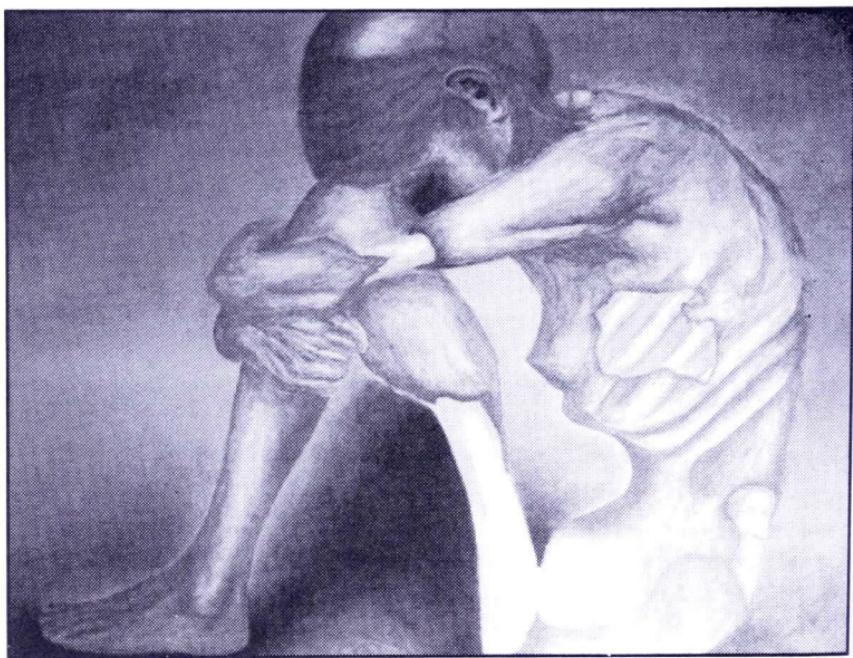
It takes just one minute to decide to open the French doors. The air is a wall, thick with rain, and I want to reach out and touch it. I step onto the balcony and rain covers me. It mats the hair down to my head, drips down my ears, coats, slick and absolute, my skin. It all seems to happen in slow motion. A raindrop hits my letter. It spreads out, catching all the ink it touches, making the words spider out like the smoky arms of a ghost or the twisting tentacles of a sea creature, caught on a microscope slide. Another raindrop strikes the surface and the ink swirls within the water, turning and spinning like the colors on an oil stain. I watch as the paper catches the rain, drips the ink into illegible smudges like running mascara, until only the final three words, the ones I repeat in my head over and over remain. *Please forgive me.* They are the most important words. I return to the bedroom and stand by the bed.

It takes just one minute to leave her side. I stand over her and wish emptily that it had been her wearing that peach sundress, the dress that I was almost able to see through. She is covered in her blanket and I want badly to pull it over her head, to make everything dark for her, to warn her to brace herself for impending pain. But, I can't. All I can do is lay the wet, ink-stained letter on the nightstand beside her and hope that she reads the last three words. I creep to the front door, avoiding the spots on the floor that creak. I hear her roll over in bed and I stop. It takes just one minute to find myself outside, umbrella-less, sloshing through puddles. It takes less than one minute to see Greenwood Park from where I am. It takes less than one minute to remember where her house is from where I am. And it takes less than one second to find myself running to her, dodging streaking rain, hoping that she is wearing that same peach sundress that she wore when I first met her.



Thinspiration

Holly Matthews



Chicken Killer Number 2

Sheena Baker

feathers and blood
clog the drain
a pink knotted clot
upon the white tile floor

chain mail gloves
hang heavier at 32 degrees
and the boning knife glints more
than an icicle

poultry throats squirt crimson
dousing denim and flannel
as she cleans up the mess
the machine left behind



Defining the Imperfect

Kristin Taylor

After the first death, there is no other.

-Dylan Thomas

“Mark is dead.” These are the words that kept resounding in my mind as Emily and I hurriedly gathered our belongings and ran out the door of Trini and Leonardo’s Spanish apartment. The elevator seemed to take an eternity to make its way to the second floor. In reality, it wasn’t taking any longer than it usually did when the two of us would stand in front of this same elevator every morning before wrestling with the heavy metal door at the entrance to the apartment complex and beginning our thirty-minute walk to the *Universidad*.

The opportunity to study abroad had enticed me since I was first introduced to the idea. I knew that in Spain, my physical world would literally become my classroom, as simple, daily interactions became tests of my knowledge. I would have the opportunity not only to improve my understanding of the Spanish language but also to learn about the culture that shaped it. I understood that the experience would be both exciting and challenging, but I was ready to test the limits of the Spanish proverb that says, “*Lo que en los libros no está, la vida te enseñará.*” (That which isn’t in books, life will teach you.)

When our group arrived in Spain, we were placed with host families who didn’t speak English. I took some comfort in the fact that, Emily, one of my friends from the States, would be my roommate, sharing the experiences of the summer and the bedroom in Trini and Leonardo’s apartment with me. But I quickly realized I was far outside my comfort zone when the number of phrases I understood during our first conversation with the older Spanish couple could be counted on one hand. A moment of truth came when I realized the limits of my own language in this new environment. The sense of powerlessness that came when words failed me, or when they didn’t, but my accent stood in the way of comprehension, became one of the most enriching, humanizing experiences of my life.



After a month in Spain, we had seen the Roman aqueduct in Segovia and the running of the bulls in Pamplona. We had gone through our recursive bouts of culture shock and homesickness. The rhythms of Spanish were becoming more innate with each passing day until my thoughts had begun to come to me in a language that was not my own and the sounds of Castilian Spanish had begun to have a familiar taste as they slid across my tongue. We were finally starting to make a routine out of our lives in another country. Then Mark's death came, bringing with it the unsettling reminder that tragedy cannot be escaped, that wherever you are, it will always – without fail – break the standards of the mundane.

"Shouldn't we just take the stairs?" I asked, receiving no answer from Emily. We both darted simultaneously for the darkened stairwell, finding a bit of relief when we reached the ground floor. We knew the walk would take too long, so we went as far as the bus stop and paid the eighty *centavos* it would cost to ride to the *parada* closest to the apartment where Sara, our group leader, was living for the summer. The bus driver stopped on a side street, next to the Plaza Mayor in the heart of Salamanca. Emily and I got off the bus, watching the groups of chattering Spaniards who were making their way along the cobblestone sidewalk and up the staircase into the Plaza. Then we walked the streets toward Sara's, asserting, in the face of oncoming traffic, as many pedestrian rights as one may have in Spain.

Arriving at her apartment, we saw Sara and her assistant holding open the front door, telling us to go on up to where the others were already waiting. In the living room, I looked at the faces of my fellow students, seated in a circle around the room. Some were crying; others were talking among themselves; some just sat in silent contemplation, numb to the others' existence. No matter the response, we all wanted to know what happened, to know the explanation that would surely make sense of it all.

A mere half hour before, Emily and I had been studying in a McDonald's at the end of *Calle de las Petunias*, trying to perfect the use of imperfect versus preterite. For speakers of Spanish, the distinction between imperfect and preterite verbs defines, with a mere switch of verb endings, the difference between repeated



actions and singly occurring actions in the past or the difference between the scenarios in which we found ourselves and the actions that interrupted those contexts. For Spanish-language learners, the concept is at first an uncomfortable one, challenging us to redefine our perceptions of past time and, in some way, to reevaluate the strictures which we impose upon time and its fluidity.

After studying for several hours (imperfect), Emily and I decided (preterite) to make the thirty-second walk back to the apartment. As we were crossing the street (imperfect), we saw Mónica (preterite), Trini's daughter-in-law, running toward us. We greeted her with a hug and *dos besitos*, one on each cheek, as Trini and Leonardo watched from their second-story balcony. “*¡Rápido, rápido!*” yelled Leonardo. “Surely we're not that late for dinner,” I thought to myself, as Mónica opened the door at the main entrance. The elevator carried the three of us to the second floor, and I found myself laughing at Mónica's humor, infectious even in my second language, but as we entered the apartment, I knew something was horribly wrong.

My laughter stopped immediately. The look on Trini's face – I had seen it before. It was the same one my parents had given me when I was eight, right before they told me that my best friend had just died. “There is a time for everything,” I could hear my dad say. “Well, your friend, Christian . . .” He didn't even have to finish before my tears came. Somehow I just knew. Then Trini spoke, jolting me out of my retrospection: “*Un de los estudiantes en tu grupo . . . murió.*” *¿Murió, murió?* – surely there was some mistake; my mind kept repeating the word, translating it, conjugating it, retranslating it. *Morir:* to die. *Muerm, mueres, muere:* I die, you die, he dies. *Morí, moriste, murió:* I died, you died, he died. “Which student?” I asked. “I don't know,” said Trini; “Sara said he was about thirty.” “*¡Dios Mío!* It's Mark,” I said to Emily, using English for the first time in front of our host family. The language I used didn't really matter anyway; in English and in Spanish, Mark was no longer with us.

At that moment, life and learning merged so uncomfortably that I desired only to pry them apart. Any romanticized notion I had of the two coming together was irreversibly shattered when the once-abstract concept of the imperfect became the



representation of Mark's presence in our lives and the preterite became the moment when he was suddenly gone. The experience left no room to misunderstand why the verb, *morir*, makes little use of the imperfect. Death happens. Death comes. It interrupts life as we have known it. It barges mercilessly into our present and seeks to destroy the context of our past and the perceptions of our future. It challenges our reality, the sources of our feigned security, the relationships we cherish, and ultimately, the very essence of ourselves. Death is a series of questions left unanswered.

As we all sat in Sara's apartment, waiting for an explanation, many of our questions remained unanswered. The cause of death shocked all of us with its suddenness, yet the questions of logistics, once answered, aren't the ones that continue to haunt you, but rather the questions that attest to the utterly human struggle to comprehend the inexplicable. What do you say to the group of students who must leave Europe knowing they've left a friend behind? What do you say to the two students who walked in to check on their sick travel companion only to find a lifeless body beneath the sheets? What do you say to the *señora* who doesn't want to return to her own home, to the place where the cherished student, and later the lifeless shell of him, once lay? What do you say to the mother who, feeling wronged by God himself, will wonder during sleepless nights if life would have been easier had she just been cursed with a barren womb? What do you say when you have two languages at your disposal and both leave you powerless, without answers for the hardest of life's questions?

When Christian died, I didn't have words even to ask the questions, much less to find the answers. The death of another child, for a child, is simply incomprehensible. Normally reserved for older individuals, like the grandfather I never had the chance to know, death could now rob even children like me of their very childhood. No one was safe. This vulnerability would make itself known in the most unseemly circumstances – one of my classmates, nervous about a difficult math test, jokingly saying he was too young to die, another responding, "Christian wasn't too young to die." And she wasn't. Even now, I can hear her saying, "I'll see you soon," as we parted ways on the last day of third grade, eager for summer vacation. I never saw her again.



At the time, I dealt with the grief in the only ways an eight-year old knows how. It often manifested itself in outward, physical ways, like when I would crawl underneath a table, each breath becoming harder and harder to breathe until the tears finally came. I didn't attend her funeral, not wanting the end of her young life to tarnish my memories with her. I collected various reminders of our friendship and stored them in a shoebox beneath my bed, where they stayed until I was fifteen. When I think of Christian, I still see us playing dress-up one day after school, only a few weeks before she died. I picture our faces, covered with red lipstick, and our hair, pulled into a haphazard arrangement of numerous ponytails. These memories – these subjective accounts of my past – became my way of preserving Christian, allowing her to grow older with me.

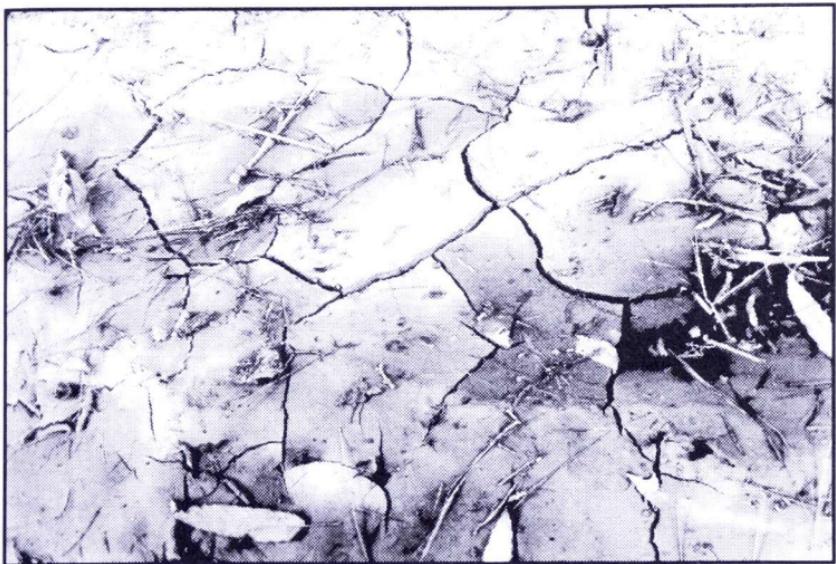
When Mark died, one loss meshed into the other, carrying me back to when I was eight, but age had brought with it the ability to acknowledge the questions that came with Mark's death. As I began grappling with those questions, my unspoken uncertainties about Christian's death rose to the surface. Over a decade after the afternoon that almost divided my life, clean-cut, into two portions, one preceding and one following the death of my childhood friend, I began to walk the painful journey toward closure. I began asking the questions that sought to make sense of a loss I viewed as unjust. How could I remember her and still let her go?

Sometimes, I suppose, there are no answers to our questions; there is only what we learn in the process of asking them. At times, the thoughts still creep in that remind me of how old Christian would be, what college she might be attending, the friendship we might still have if she were still alive. But what both of these losses have taught me is that life should not be defined by the brief instances of life in the preterite, but rather by the life we define for ourselves in the spaces of the imperfect – the context in which others may enter our lives and change it forever. In the spaces of my imperfect, I see Christian, and I am blessed that she was.



Erosion

Christen Anne Holloway



iLongo
Neal Jordan



Equivocal Topology

Carey Scott Wilkerson

We found the news of this poem alarming
and we trust you will not press us for further comment
as one might document the margins of grace,
peeling ghosts from the mirror of your similitude

I have seen you in the dimming light
folding toward some forgotten form
lost on the plasmic vistas of democracy,
recitations of names in slow erasure
known quantities sluicing away

We remain resolutely opposed to these grammatical songs,
these ruinous texts and endless declensions of alterity.
We want to understand this in terms of simpler conjectures.
There is evidence of a deception here.

in a deepening logic of parody
an end, after all, to ironic shapes
a closure of expressive shadow
a waking from a life in the delirium of scansion
and the cruel freedoms peculiar to the motif of sleep.

I will not have written this.



Warning to Dog Owners North of Kentucky

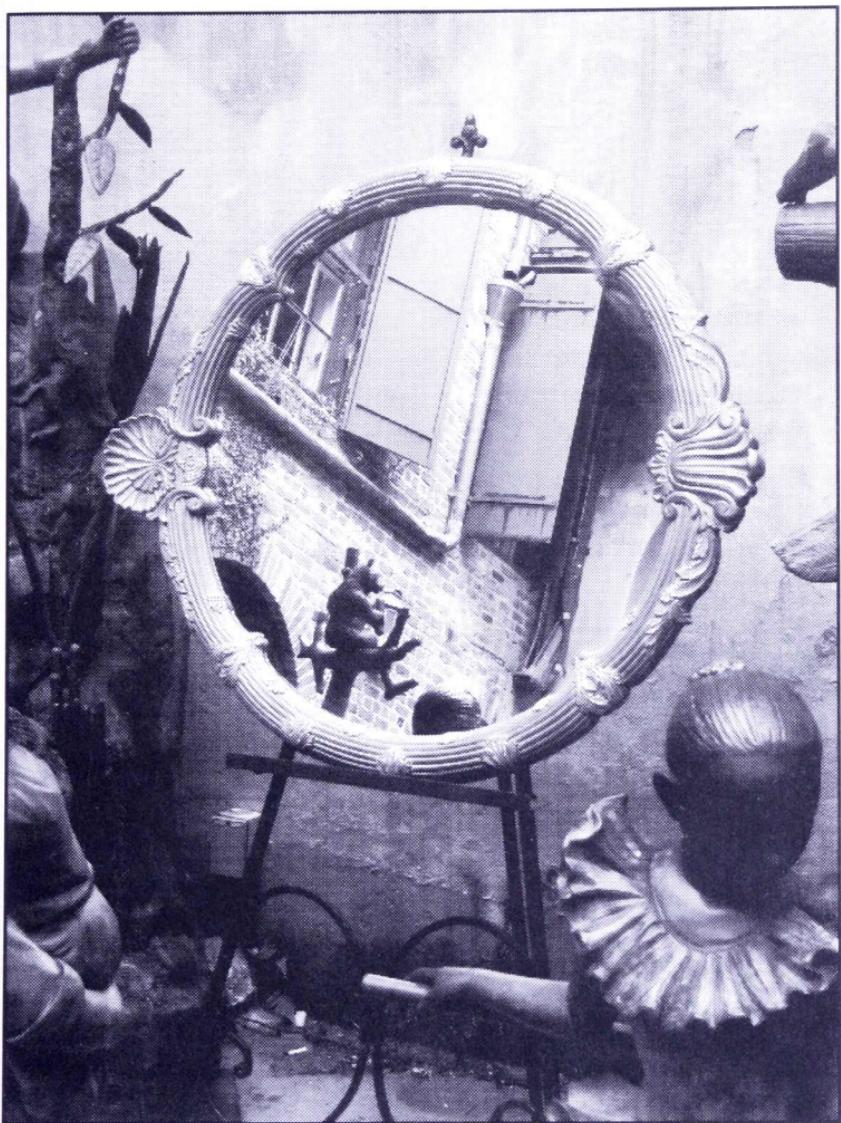
John Summerfield

Alligators beach themselves on the bend.
They allow people to pass between them.
They never bat an eye –
Add a dog, different story –
Beautiful, this nice toy poodle, and
Oh boy, the woman cried all the way back to her car.
You have to believe she drove like mad, all the way to Michigan.



French Quarter Reflection

Reagan L. Grimsley



Taxicab Dreams

Jessica R. McCalister

It was my first introduction to American taxis; I'd seen a few in Britain – shiny, polished hearse-like mobiles – but nothing that came close to my preconceived notions of the New York kind. We had just departed the train, pushed through hoards of smelly tourists to retrieve our bags, and walked into the beaming sunlight of Manhattan. I was somehow first in line at the taxi queue, a virgin to the ways of the hired drivers. A uniformed man, hat and all, loaded luggage into the back of the waiting taxi and I slid inside over the sticky faux leather seats, meekly handed an address to the driver through the window, and sat back for a relaxing ride. As the trunk lid slammed down, he drove away, rammed the gas pedal to the floorboard directly into the congestion of cars beside us, but somehow made room. To each side of the car were inches of space. The gas and brake pedals were either slammed or untouched; there was no in between. He sped along with precision, turning onto back streets, sliding into spaces I surely thought were impossible. I slid on the seats and had to make a concentrated effort to stay in one place. Red lights were mere suggestions, although we only ran a few. Pedestrians were honked at and given an occasional gesture as bicycle riders (both those riding for pleasure and for work) bravely – or perhaps stupidly – dodged waves of yellow to get from place to place. We made it to our destination after a very short ride. At the point of drop-off, however, I had no clue the actual distance we'd traveled.

Stepping onto the curb, I felt immersed into New York culture. It was my first visit to the city that never sleeps. On a Sunday afternoon, hotter than average, people littered the streets, most of them walking alone. I looked around, unable to grasp my bearings because nothing was familiar. The taxi drove away, my only familiarity. As I waited for other friends to join me, I watched the speeding cars and pedestrians. I stood on the street corner with my heavy luggage and my first observation was that of the peeling taxi cab. After my stressful first experience with American taxis, I yearned for some sort of comfort but all I received was a visual overflow of bumped and dented taxis speeding past me.



I realized within a few moments that taxi cabs in New York are one of two things: either pristine with glossy yellow paint or peeling and dented. The former is a common sight. The latter, however, is much more common, an odd observance because taxis are not allowed to be driven longer than five years. Just how much damage can be done to a car in five years? And more importantly, I wondered, why were there so many of the peeling cabs? The so-called peeling cabs, with their front, rectangular bumper stops resembling bulls' horns, have voids in the paint on front and rear bumpers. They look decrepit in a way, slowly deteriorating with each mile. But then again, in a way, they look strong and seasoned, well versed in the cutthroat world of cab fares, passengers, and traffic.

The vision of peeling cabs forced me into a reflection on the drivers themselves. The cars can't very well cause damage on their own. Perhaps, I thought, being a taxi driver in New York is much more complex than what I'd originally imagined. An anonymous New York City policeman once said, "The thing I can't tell is whether cab drivers yield to each other out of fear or respect." As humorous as the quote may be, it offers insight into the world of the taxi driver. Yes, they are brazen. Yes, they are forceful. But why?

My first impression of the New York City taxicab and their drivers was that of dominating figures. They all seemed to be fighting for something: passengers, fares, first in line at the red light. The peeling taxi cabs were unable to be fazed. No matter what, they were going to make their way through the crowd of cars and people. Watching the drivers – the vast majority of whom are immigrants – they all have an insatiable drive (pun somewhat intended). Red lights are suggestions because the drivers' lives depend on whether or not the passenger gets to their destination on time. It's a pure example of the American dream. It takes hard work and diligence to become a successful cab driver and with the New York Taxi and Livery Commission's strict guidelines, becoming successful driving a taxicab means conquering the toughest city in the world.

To be a taxi driver in New York means having thousands of co-workers all striving for the same dream. Residents know to



yield, mostly out of fear, I'm sure. Visitors yield out of complete and utter fear; their impending death is a big factor. And so, other drivers must yield out of respect for their common goal. The more bumps and bruises on the cab, the better a fighter the driver is. Operating taxicabs is strict business. Although outsiders think of drivers having their own cabs, it is becoming increasingly difficult for single people to own taxis and all that owning one requires. It is a constant struggle to become successful in a career many see as dead-end. Mayor La Guardia introduced a system of taxi medallions in 1937, hoping to ensure the quality of taxi rides for both driver and passenger. Each licensed taxicab has a medallion on its hood. A finite number of medallions were distributed and sold in 1937, which meant that although the pieces were inexpensive at their first distribution, rarity drove up the average worth, some selling for hundreds of thousands of dollars. In 1996, the city auctioned off new medallions. The average cost of a single medallion is upwards of \$300,000, making it nearly impossible for a new immigrant to purchase their own car and medallion. Sixty percent of drivers hope to own their own medallions; five percent actually reach it.

It's these statistics that make the rough life of a taxi driver so tangible. They work six days per week, twelve hours per day, and make \$60,000 on a good year. They can't afford to live in Manhattan, often can't afford their own taxis, and rarely own medallions. Many beginning drivers work for taxi companies and can only hope to become their own bosses. To succeed as a taxi and taxi medallion owner is to conquer an impressive feat. Immigrants new to taxi driving realize the statistics, including their projected incomes and likely failure to reach their goal, and yet they work towards the dream anyway. Although it isn't the typical American citizen's version of the American dream, it still requires a fight to move up in society. And although the fight to achieve the American dream is prevalent with taxi drivers, the passengers themselves stand as reminders of the dream.

Walking the streets after emerging from dingy subway stations, I began to notice the demographics of the taxi hailers themselves, and how riding in a taxi is just as much a part of the American dream as is driving one. The whole time I was in New



York – four weeks – I only rode in taxis twice, once from Penn Station to my Washington Square home and the second back to the station. Why? For one, it was expensive: \$8 for a one and a half mile drive. Whereas the immigrant taxi drivers strive for their version of the American dream, New Yorkers riding in back seats strive for the same goal. To take taxis – religiously or on occasion – requires a serious amount of money. I began to wonder if the ability to ride in them is a mark of distinction. During my last taxi ride in New York I thought of these things. I watched the pedestrians carrying heavy plastic shopping bags, watched them stopping for water at sidewalk carts, watched them turn and walk down subway entrances. I saw them waiting at crosswalks as they stared off into space. I rarely saw people with their hands in the air hoping a taxi would come. I thought of the times I'd made mental notes of taxi hailers. They seemed to always be holding shopping bags or briefcases, always wearing tailored business suits or effortlessly fashionable outfits, always gracefully and without hesitation sticking their arms in the air to hail a cab, without even a thought to the money they were about to spend.

A man near Astor Place contorted his right shoulder, perching his sleek phone between his ear and collar bone, held his alligator briefcase in his left hand and used his right arm to stop a cab. It looked painful, yet elegant. He'd done it before, knew just how to move his body so that his phone and briefcase were safe from thieves, or more importantly, the pitted and grimy sidewalk. It took practice and diligence to make it so effortless, and to him it was probably a redundant task. He'd obviously made his way in New York, been financially stable enough (or in far enough in debt) to afford a common ride in a taxi.

One humid afternoon I walked from the subway station at 77th and Lexington Avenue to the Whitney Museum. Waiting for the signal to change at the corner of Madison Avenue, I watched a young girl help her grandmother. They were gathering things: a suitcase, the dog carrier, bags from various stores. The girl, maybe ten, wearing a plush jump suit and a Tiffany bangle bracelet, cupped her dog – a miniature Chihuahua – under one arm and used the other to hail a cab. The grandmother didn't watch; she was too busy surveying their luggage. She spotted a



taxis, threw up her arm in an instant, knew somehow that the driver would stop, and turned to help her grandmother. My light changed promising a safe crossing and I left, but I soon turned back to see the girl's head at the taxi's window (presumably to give the driver their destination) before she loaded the remaining packages into the trunk. The taxi sped off once the back door closed, leaving me to marvel at the scene of a young girl nonchalantly doing what I was scared to do. She'd been bred for it. Her ten years of life included instruction on taxi hailing and Madison Avenue shopping.

That same day, walking back to the subway, I watched a young woman hail a taxi on Park Avenue. She was a stereotypical model – tall and blonde, wearing death-defying high heels that further accentuated her height. I was reminded of a friend's observation: "You can tell which women have money for cabs because they wear heels. They don't have to walk anywhere." A phone in one hand, she threw up the other and cabs seemed to stop instantly. The vision reminded me of Claudette Colbert's famous leg-baring scene in *It Happened One Night*. Attention was diverted to her at once. She chose her carriage, slithered inside, and continued uptown.

The successful businessman, the young girl bred for Manhattan, the model stopping taxis in their tracks: they were all versions of an accomplished American dream. They all hailed taxis with practiced precision, their daily task a luxury to many New Yorkers striving to conquer the city.

After having personal experience with New York City taxicabs, the operation of them becomes much more admirable. The fight to obtain the American dream of wealth and success remains strong on both sides of the car divider. Without one, there would be no other. Money in New York – as much of it as there is – flows from person to person, from accomplished Manhattanite to fighting immigrant. It makes New York that much more fascinating. The yellow taxicab – what can be argued as a symbol of New York City – stands as a moving symbol of the American dream. To drive one means to strive for success, while riding in one implies accomplishment.



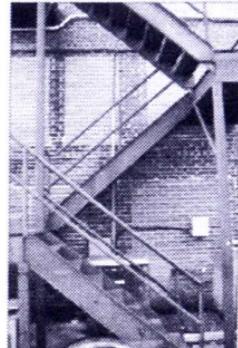
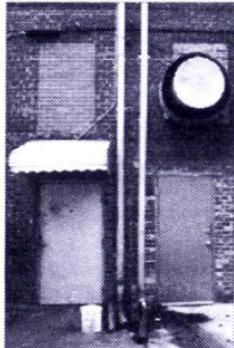
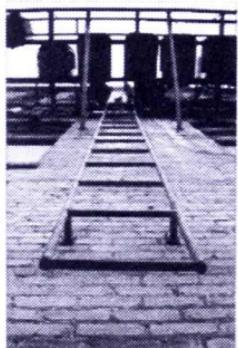
Union Station

Jenny Ross



Haiku in F# Minor

Franklin Dillard II



Pinsky Reads to a Southern Girl

Crystal Jenkins Woods

His elastic face moves
through its gears: pensive, wise, content.
Even twenty rows back
on the edge of his voice, I am soothed –
delivery perfect, not a hint of drawl.

When I imagine his house, though,
there are frayed rugs,
bits of food along the kitchen baseboards,
windows he can't reach coated with grime,
prescription bottles that say his name
with no more admiration than any other,
a dog with a taste for shoes.

A half-graded essay is filleted on his
dining room table, its surgeon
now swaying at the podium,
showing me God's plan for enunciating vowels.



Love Is For the Birds

Chace Webb

I can't smell your perfume anymore dear
The sand fills my nostrils with every breath.
All I hear is the solemn patience of crows.
The sun on your face, hard earned halo.
These winds envelope us, carnivorous
And I blink away a mirage of doves.

Oh you're as white as the plumes of doves
But *Cardinal* feathers dress your breast, dear
Staining your innocence, so carnivorous.
I still taste our last kiss on my breath
So soft, your lips were a trembling halo
That I fell on, like a murder of crows.

And thus the sun falls, just as lovers and crows
Sordid and vile these craven funerary doves
In Love with Death, circling horrid halo.
I'll hide you in a quicksand grave my dear.
But don't say a word, don't breathe a breath
Or they'll find you, with Love carnivorous.

Like I found you, with Love carnivorous.
I held you, an embrace of starved crows
As my heart won the race against my breath.
While clipping the wings of Aphrodite's doves
So slowly I twisted the knife my dear
Carving your chest a hole like a halo.

You have to die to deserve a halo.
And this desert consumes us, carnivorous.
This was to be a single tomb my dear
But I fall once again to your siren crows.
So I'll wait with these wretched carrion doves
And Love you...and Hate you with my last breath.



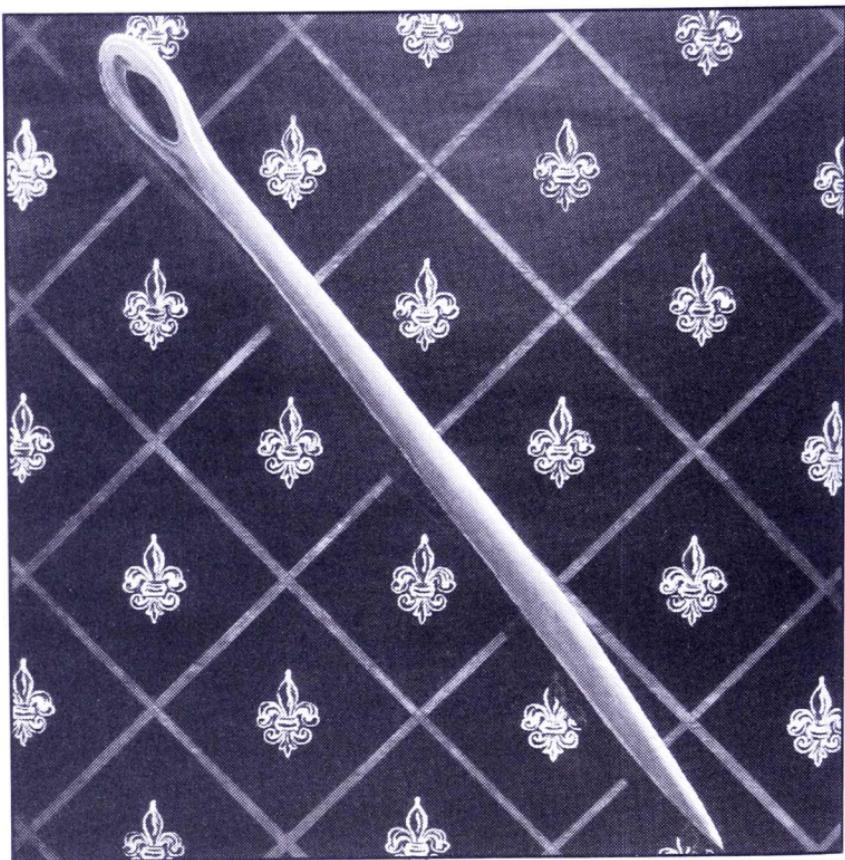
On my neck I can feel Death's putrid breath.
He'll have to wait to give me my halo,
'til I see this body of desecrated doves
Turn open its innards to carnivorous
Monsters, to watch this whore open to crows.
I'll live to see all of you die my dear.

My dear, I give this last gift, my last breath.
The crows descend from their damned halo.
We were ever prey to carnivorous loves.



Blue Boy

Stacy Tsui



Firestuff

Chelsea Bullock

The axe's dull weight scared me —
Its blunt might no matter of reckoning.
You swung rapidly, with force,
Almost every cut splintery clean.

Its blunt might no matter of reckoning,
The wood gave every time.
Almost every cut splintery clean.
Log met dirt, hollowing the air around it.

The wood gave every time.
You swung rapidly, with force and
Log met dirt, hollowing the air around it.
The axe's dull weight scared me.



Sticks and Stones

Miranda Baras

*The same music should play throughout the entire piece, dark and grotesque, sort of like carnival music with a little Girl singing, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me.”

I. *Girl is jumping rope while singing.*

GIRL: (*Sings*) Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.

Girl gets hit in the head by a stone thrown from an unknown source.

GIRL: Ouch.

She begins to cry childishly.

II. *Person covered in cuts and bruises with their arm in a sling is surrounded by a pile of rubble that is all sticks and stones. They methodically sort the sticks and stones out and then spell the word “sticks” on the ground with sticks, followed by “and” made of sticks and stones, finally followed by the word “stones” made of stones. They stare at the words on the ground as if the words themselves were the cause of the brutal injuries upon their body. The person hurries off.*

III. *The Girl from the first scene is sitting in a huge pile of books. She is completely surrounded by books. She is in a state of euphoria, smiling, laughing, hugging the books, swimming in them. She finally chooses a book and happily settles down to read.*

IV. *The Girl is in the pile of books, still reading. Very slowly pebbles begin to fall from the sky onto the Girl and the books, so few that she doesn't notice at first. Slowly, more and more pebbles begin to fall, followed by rocks and sticks. The Girl begins to scream. Finally, she is forced to flee while still clutching the book she was reading. She holds the book over her head for protection as she runs off.*

V. *The Girl runs into a room. There are sticks and stones and blood splattered on the floor of the room. The walls are splattered with blood. The Girl then begins to notice that the blood on the walls is not simple*



splatters, but is in fact a plethora of horrible and graphic words written in blood by some unseen, menacing hand. (FOR WORDS THINK ALONG THE LINES OF: "Rape", "War", "Genocide", "Murder", "Agony", "Fear", "Pain", etc...)

VI. Much to the Girl's dismay, the words begin to come alive surrounding her and, slowly moving in on her. Some of the words pick up sticks or stones to strike the Girl. The Girl looks around for an escape. The words chase the Girl as she runs for her life.

VII. The Girl runs from the words, still clutching her book. She stops abruptly. There is a large wall in front of her. The words have her cornered. The Girl hugs her book before desperately hurling it at the evil word assailants. The words keep moving in as if for the kill. Desperate, the Girl pulls a stick of chalk out of her pocket and writes a one beautiful word on the wall: "LOVE". The menacing words stop their advances and stare at the word as if confused until suddenly...

VIII. The word "LOVE" comes to life and jumps off of the wall. LOVE stands between the Girl and the bad words. The bad words try to fight LOVE, however love counters their attacks through various means. LOVE begins dancing with one of the words, takes the chalk from the little Girl and draws a hopscotch game on the ground and shows the bad words how to play hopscotch with their stones, teaches some of the bad words to play pick-up sticks with their sticks, and teaches the rest of the bad words to jump rope. Finally, LOVE exits and returns with the Girl's book. LOVE hands the Girl her book. The Girl and LOVE hold hands and dance around while surrounded by the bad words as they all frolic and play.

I. Girl is jumping rope while singing.

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Girl gets hit in the head by a stone thrown from an unknown source.

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II. Person covered in cuts and bruises with their arm in a sling is sur-



rounded by a pile of rubble that is all sticks and stones. They methodically sort the sticks and stones out and then spell the word “sticks” on the ground with sticks, followed by “and” made of sticks and stones, finally followed by the word “stones” made of stones. They stare at the words on the ground as if the words themselves were the cause of the brutal injuries upon their body. The person hurries off.

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PERSON: Oh Dear G-D!

The person drops the books and runs off in the same direction as the little Girl.

V. *The Girl runs into a room. There are sticks and stones and blood splattered on the floor of the room. The walls are splattered with blood. The Girl then begins to notice that the blood on the walls is not simple splatters, but is in fact a plethora of horrible and graphic words written in blood by some unseen, menacing hand. (FOR WORDS THINK ALONG THE LINES OF: “Rape”, “War”, “Genocide”, “Murder”, “Agony”, “Fear”, “Pain”, etc...)*

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VIII. *The Words pounce on the Girl and begin savagely beating her to death with the sticks and stones. Finally, the words leave the Girl in a bloody heap on the ground.*

GIRL: The words hurt me.

The Girl dies. The Person comes rushing in to find the lifeless body of the Girl.

PERSON: No, no. Not again!

The Person crumples to their knees.

PERSON: NOOOOOOOO!

I. *The action in sections "a" and "b" should occur simultaneously on separate parts of the stage. The Person and Girl should be unaware of each other as if they are in separate worlds.*

a. SL, *A Person sits on the ground. There is a book on the ground near the Person. The Person is cutting himself with a small, sharp stone. The Person uses the blood from the fresh wound to write *words (*same words from V) on small scraps of paper. The Person then tapes or glues the words into the book. When the Person is done sealing the words in the book the person tosses the rock off. The rock is the same rock that hits the Girl in the head.*

b. SR, *Girl is jumping rope while singing.*

GIRL: (Sings) Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.

Girl gets hit in the head by a stone thrown from an unknown source.

GIRL: Ouch.

She begins to cry childishly.



II. The Person enters carrying the same book. Person covered in cuts and bruises with their arm in a sling is surrounded by a pile of rubble that is all sticks and stones. They methodically sort the sticks and stones out and then spell the word “sticks” on the ground with sticks, followed by “and” made of sticks and stones, finally followed by the word “stones” made of stones. They stare at the words on the ground as if the words themselves were the cause of the brutal injuries upon their body. The person hurries off with the book still in hand.

III. The Girl from the first scene is sitting in a huge pile of books. The book that the Person was carrying is at the top of the pile. The Girl is completely surrounded by books. She is in a state of euphoria, smiling, laughing, hugging the books, swimming in them. The Girl picks up the book that the Person left on top of the pile. She opens the book, looks at the words in horror and quickly shuts the book and throws it offstage. She finally chooses another book and happily settles down to read.

IV. The Girl is in the pile of books, still reading. Very slowly pebbles begin to fall from the sky onto the Girl and the books, so few that she doesn’t notice at first. Slowly, more and more pebbles begin to fall, followed by rocks and sticks. The Girl begins to scream. Finally, she is forced to flee while still clutching the book she was reading. She holds the book over her head for protection as she runs off. The Person from scene II walks onto to scene hurriedly. The sticks and stones have stopped falling from the sky. The Person stops and looks down at the pile of books. The Person picks up a book and opens it.

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VIII. *The words pounce on the Girl and begin savagely beating her to death with the sticks and stones. Finally, the words leave the Girl in a bloody heap on the ground.*

GIRL: The words hurt me.

The Girl dies.

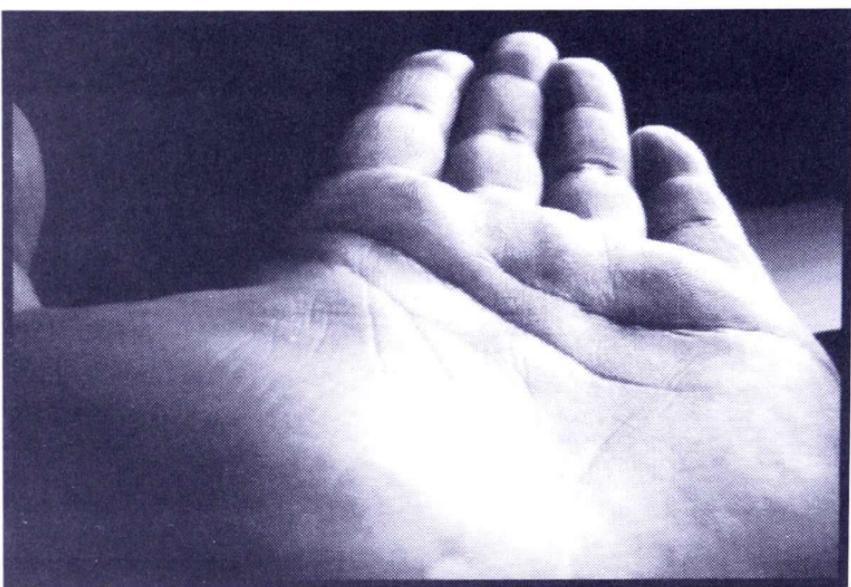
After the Girl dies the words shrink back into small scraps of paper sprinkled all around her corpse.

The Person comes rushing in holding the book that the Girl threw at the words. The Person stares down at the lifeless body of the Girl.

The Person slowly picks up the scraps of paper and begins to shove them back into the book.



Hand
Matthew Farina



She Sleeps in Loess Bluffs

Beth Spencer

for Gina

Cane bound black ravens molt over your pillow and hair, as his head presses into your shoulder. While his hands crush your throat, yours beat like wings.

Bleach white gloves tweeze hair and skin from your nails while your eyes smile from the screen. You meet the gaze of millions who pause to look up from their steak and peach cobbler, shake their heads, and begin cutting the next bite.

Stone-perched in the sunken chair, I remember the day I threw you the stick for the piñata at my fourth birthday. You, blindfolded, smashed its belly full of bubble gum and milk duds. We raked the candy at your feet as you laughed and whipped the bandanna from your eyes. The police report said nothing in your home suggested a struggle. Except that your bed was destroyed.

I know you tore down to his bones when the black feathers swarmed your room.



Untitled

Jill Tankersley

i see suffering
while i wait meagerly
to pursue my perusal
of fictional drama
that i can better relate to

i wonder about the boy
the same age as Jesus when he taught at the temple
fingers entwined
around the fat strap
of an enormous shotgun

i wander
through the intense literature
of a stimulating Book
and the acute shelter
of my comforter.

i watch them revise
a dark man
for a diamond
a rock
for a place
a detonator
for an ideal
a tiny heart
for a hamburger

i hypothesize
instead intrigued by the
taste of tiramisu

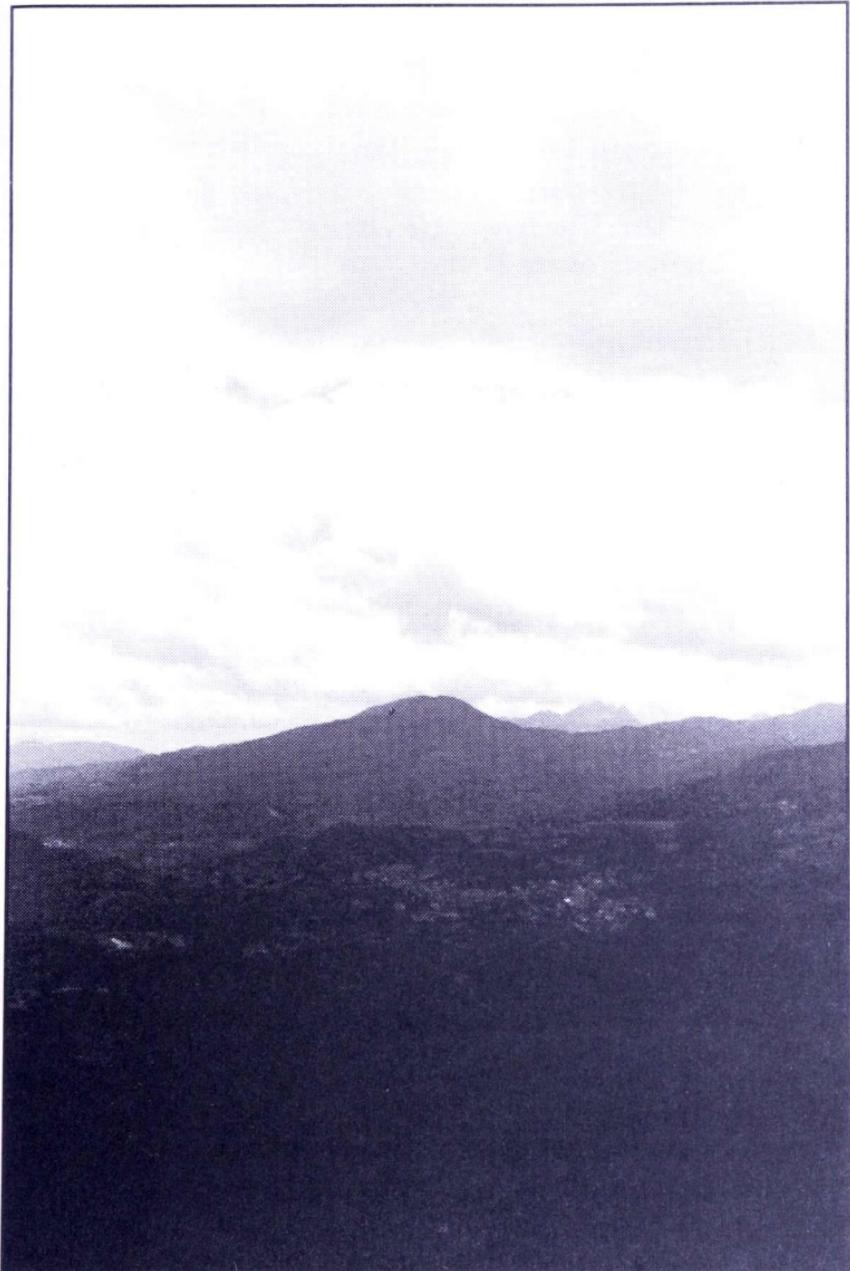
i see shriveled hands and feet
of children so hungry
their virgin tummies swell
who relish in rot
endearing darlings

i've never seen death
i don't think they're allowed to show it
what does He look like?



Italy

Justin Hadley



Valarie

Lindsay Millet

I wish I knew the color of your antidepressants.
The ones you swallowed and swallowed
So they might give you a smile when you finally died.
If they were orange like your hair. Those curls I
Knew so well that summer from every time you made use of
My shoulder. That blue that doesn't match robin's eggs or
The Mediterranean or any kind of jeans, just your eyes.

I think on where everyone was in your house and
I think on to when we were both there, together,
Introducing ourselves to so many things wrong
Then laughing at cartoons and eggs mixed with Smirnoff
At all hours of the morning while your parents were
In Mexico.

I can't find a tear to cry for you, just these pictures.
All these pictures. Here, our faces painted to look
Like Indians with the rest of our theatre troupe. I think
We got first place that year. This one is our junior prom.
You wanted to look like Marilyn Monroe that year,
Do you remember? Running from the crowd, jumping into
A white van that took us away with our laughter and
All of our problems rolled into one just fell out of the
Windows, the tires trampled them and we were
Whole. All of us. You and me. We looked so happy,
You should see it. We looked so happy.

If you should attempt this until it is done, I only
Need you to know so much. So much of me will die
With you. A midnight swim, water dark as sin, where
We confessed so much. Foggy, haunted roads where
We laughed to keep from shaking. We held tight and
Tried to brave it together. I listened to how you had
Pierced your own lip and you listened to how I loved
My cat more than anyone and I listened to how your father



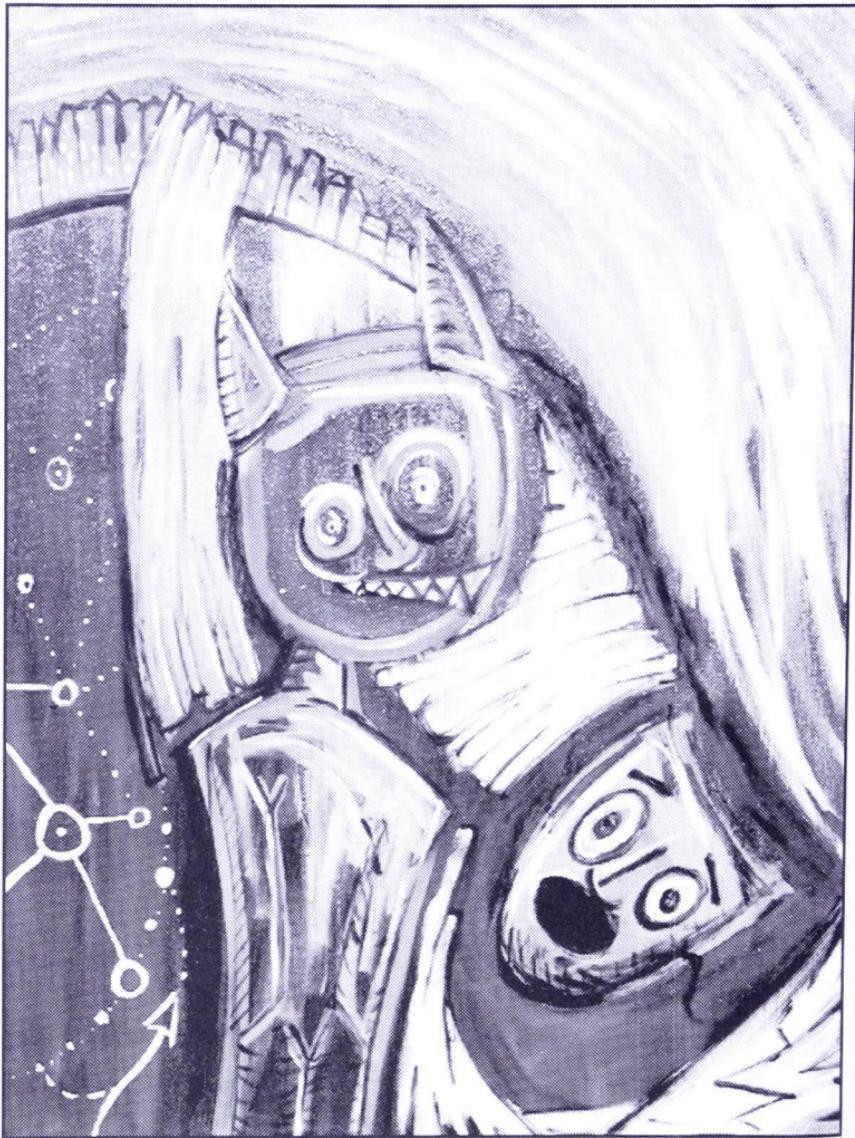
Had had a stroke and you listened to how I was by my
Cat's side the night he died and I listened to how you
Had been kicked out and you listened to how I had finally
Left my father and I listened to how you chose them over
Me and you listened to how I was fine with it and we both
Knew that it would not be our last conversation.

We broke and mended each others'
Hearts so many times it is hard to count.
But I will die with you. I will die with you.
I will die with you.



Lil' Blue Devil

Franklin Dillard II



Blissful Discomfort

Lauren Wertz

You've tried a hundred times or more
to recall that song we heard in Raleigh –
it was the day we stopped near Sullivan's:
windows down, sunroof cracked,
the brisk, autumn air met excessive melodies
of morbid chord progressions and funk metal riffs.
You laughed and played your air-guitar, your air-drums,
while I sat, protecting my half-blown ears from
the massive waves of that electric opus –
and I haven't a clue what it was.



Cameo Birds

Addie Hughes Newcomer



Nesting 2

Addie Hughes Newcomer



iSolation

Chelsea Bullock

Two suggestions were given to me before traveling to New York City, one was to avoid eye contact with people on the street and subways, and the second was to walk purposefully. Attempting to accomplish both of these tasks can be useful in shedding the tourist image, but it also significantly limits the ability to perceive the city with any depth. However, this fast-paced and eye-averted walking is the standard on the city streets. One of the most evident indicators of this standardization is the prevalence of the iPod. Not only does the iPod allow an individual to craft their own musical escape, but it provides buoyancy to the walking pace and even has a charming little click wheel and brightly lit screen to give cautious, nervous eyes somewhere safe to rest. Its internationally recognized white earbuds advertise the wearer's unavailability to communicate, and perhaps more importantly, their lack of desire to do so. The earbuds indicate that the wearer is only interested in listening to their music or podcast of choice while they speed along to their destination. The iPod is merely a way of hurrying along a tedious, but required daily commute.

On a Thursday afternoon, the subway car is filled with iPod wearers as we approach the West 4th Street station. One man is in his fifties, donning an expensive pair of jeans, a tight, thin cotton shirt and flip-flops. As I squeeze past him I notice that his black, video iPod is playing Pink Martini. The following morning I sit next to a woman in her twenties wearing a brown dress, lots of cheap jewelry, a pair of brown kitten heels, and totting her iPod inside of her cutesy Le Sportsac. She pulls it out to fidget with the click wheel and with a well-timed stretch I note that she is listening to Billie Holiday. Leaning against the door of our car, in direct violation of clearly posted (but always ignored) safety rules, a teenaged boy runs his fingers through his unwashed hair, and hikes up his baggy jeans that are weighed down by a number of metal chains. I cannot catch a glimpse of his iPod screen, but his Metallica t-shirt, acne, and head-banging give me a solid lead as to what kind of music is piping into his



ears. That evening, some friends and I were returning from a movie when I ended up sharing a pole with a man in his early thirties. He was wearing navy, pinstriped pants and a dress shirt with a loosened navy tie. His silver Shuffle was playing loud enough for me to recognize strains of Snow Patrol.

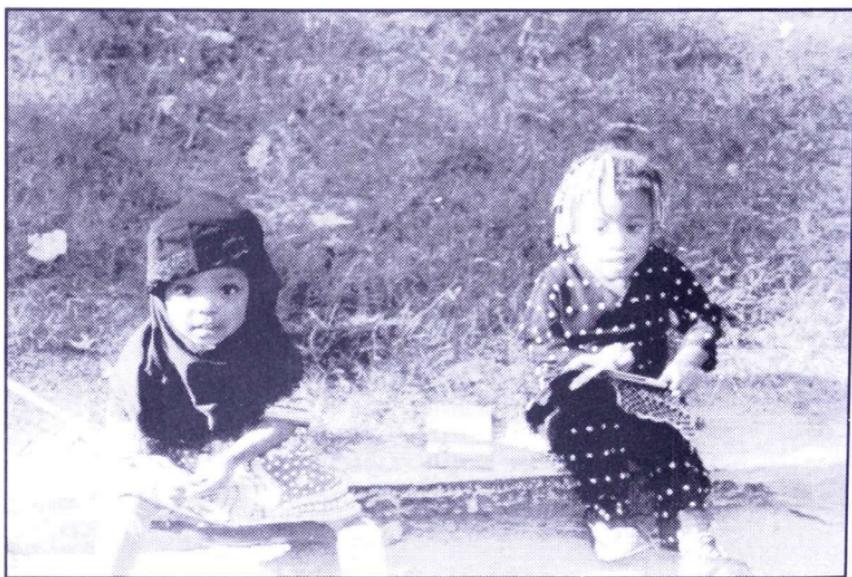
I felt a brief sense of connectedness to these fellow iPod owners, but it is confusing as that connection is obviously not something they seek out or desire. At the least, I am grateful for the straightforward statement that the earbuds make. The town from which I traveled to New York is a growing, Southern town full of old-school charm and all of the rules that accompany it. When passing someone on the street, in traffic, or shopping, it is customary to make eye contact and acknowledge the other person in some form – a smile, a “hello,” or even just a nod. It is considered rude to simply ignore the people around you. After all, in a town like this, you never know who you’re related to, worked with, went to school with, or even who knows someone that knew you in any of the above capacities. It’s just safer to be polite. However, many of these social encounters are filled with syllable-stretching, honeysuckle-sweet sentiments that no one actually means, but their presence in daily life is as ubiquitous as the iPod in New York. Both the Southern clichés and the iPods of New York serve similar purposes – defense and isolation. The iPod fulfills this role in an obvious manner, and after observing a conversation of the above description it is easy to discern the shield that the scripted statements create.

If I had to choose which thing I would arm myself with I think the iPod is healthier, and less deceitful. People on a subway humor few pretenses, preparing themselves for the ride with some form of defense, most commonly the iPod, but sometimes a book, newspaper, or puzzle book. However, in Southern culture, the most accepted armor is that of charm and conversation. But the depth of those conversations is very shallow, and the animatedly interested facial expressions fade as soon as the other party is out of eyesight. It is destructive system that has been established, and rather than continue to perpetuate it, I’ll just wear my iPod with pride.



The Gaze

Neal Jordan



Annie in the Summer

Lori Hinkley

When the Texas sun set the earth ablaze,
and the long days bled slowly into evenings spent chasing
fireflies, I could
look out her kitchen window and see
the fields dotted with the white of blossomed cotton
clinging to dead stalks. My cousins
and I would run up and down
the rows chasing each other, scraping our ankles on the blooms,
not daring to reach for the soft downy fruit. The
thorny stalks would poke the shit out of you if you dared to steal
what beauty they held onto, and before
you knew it you were nothing but a ball of tears and a spot of
blood.
You had to find her and beg for a band-aid to stick on your war
wound;
She would fix you
up with a cherry cordial, and pat you on the butt
sending you back to summer.



Empty Wine Cellar

Molly Mitchell

Bottles aged in that cellar,
Full of thick liquid, dark as blood.
Now, layer upon layer of dust collects on lonely racks.
Particles float and drift in silence, in darkness.
A lone moth lies face up on the cold cement floor.



Holding Hands

Molly Mitchell

I read somewhere that couples
should hold hands during
an argument to reduce
stress,

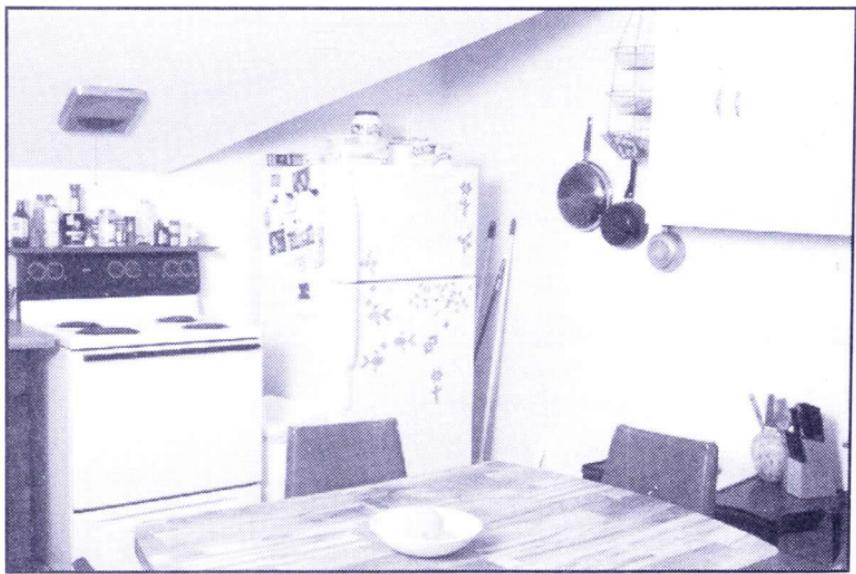
But I am scared to hold your hand
because if you lose your
temper you will crush
mine,

Like the time you smashed
the table with your fist
and told me to be glad it
wasn't my face.



Kitchen

Evelyn Nicole Kirksey



Inheritance

Sheena Baker

Even now I see her face. She stands
frowning over a rolling pin,
brow streaked with sweat and flour
smeared by a biscuit-crusty hand.

I am startled by the barrage of peas
unzipped by nimble purple thumbs,
then fired into a five-gallon bucket
braced between two sturdy knees.

She guides my chubby fingers, encased within
her own, as we trace the fat glass
letters, savoring each sound together –
M-A-S-O-N.



Life, Abrupt

Kevin Ramirez

The whiteness fades and I'm driving down some street. I look around, as usual, for clues to tell me where the hell I'm going. My watch says that it is 12:20, but I've learned to not trust things so easily. The sun is directly overhead, so I guess it really is noon. Residential neighborhood. I better slow down. Hardaway Avenue. I have no clue what I'm doing on Hardaway Avenue. A man walking a dog. Spotted Dalmatian. Breath comes out in puffs. Tall buildings in the far distance. God, what day is it? A woman on the sidewalk. Her face follows my creeping car. Her brow furrows. She waves. At me! I hit the breaks and back up. I roll the window down and lean toward it.

"Hey," I say, as casually as I can.

"You passed me, jerk," she says, opening the door.

"Yeah, I know."

I smile. She sits down and tucks a black curl behind her ear. She seems to be moving in slow motion. Red nails drag across her cheekbone. Thick mass of black curls bundled up by a maroon scrunchie. Toothy smile. High-yellow skin. Tall like a reed hollow. Tan turtleneck. Hoop earrings.

"Come on, Robert, I'm starving," she says, tugging on my arm.

It's a stiffly cold New York afternoon. That much I know. I drive the car forward down the unfamiliar street with an unfamiliar woman in my passenger seat. Unfamiliarity, ironically, is a feeling that I'm most familiar with. I keep glancing at her. There has to be something.

"I love the scarf, by the way! Thank you!" she said, with a laugh.

I look at her neck. A brown, cashmere scarf is wrapped around it.

"Well...good!"

No hints anywhere, but there have to be. God, I can't remember! A sudden idea.

"I say we get some wine," I say, playfully.

"Sounds good to me."

"Well, I'm gonna need to see some ID, young lady."

"What?" she asks, giggling.



“Can’t have minors stumbling around the city drunk as a skunk.”

“Oh, okay. Well, here,” she laughs, handing me her ID from her purse.

Banks, Saadia Janelle. 04-13-1981. Height 5-07 Weight 131

“You’re not lookin at my weight, are you?” she asks, snatching the card back.

Saadia.

“Nah, just makin sure the picture is real. You’re good,” I say.

But, I whisper her name in my head. Saadia. Saadia. I whisper until the inevitable whiteness pours over everything.

Saadia. Even in the whiteness.

The whiteness fades and I’m staring at a computer screen. Numbers again. Still no idea what they mean. Same cubicle around me. I guess they all look the same, though. I must be at work. I’ve gotten used to looking at the random papers that appear on my desk and just filling them up with random answers. No one says anything. Not that I can remember it anyway.

“Hey Robert, do you know where the 201K forms are?” someone pops up and asks.

Wait a sec. I know this guy.

He stares at me.

Ummm...

James!

“Yeah James, I think I left them with Ryan.”

“Okay, thanks man.”

I laugh to myself. I don’t know where Ryan came from. I think I just made up the name, but then again, I might actually know him. Should I bother figuring out the date and time? The lights get brighter. Nah. My chair feels like it’s spinning, though my feet are on the ground. All around me is white. I hope when I come back, I’m with Saadia. Saadia with the black curls. I think I like her. Again, the whiteness.

“Oh yeah!”

Color floods back. I squint my eyes. A living room. Mine, I think. I look down. My couch, creamy, white leather.



Straight ahead, my television. Beneath, a beige lake of carpet, soft against my bare, tingling toes. Yeah, my living room.

"I got our pictures developed!" she says, rummaging through her purse.

I rub my eyes and look at myself. Black basketball shorts. White v-neck t-shirt. Familiar brown hands, turning up and down in front of my eyes. Yes, I'm really here. Her breasts poke forward against her tight green spaghetti-strap shirt. I don't know if it's okay to stare at them yet. So I don't. Her black curls bounce against her shoulders as she digs through her purse. Her legs, long, grasshopper-like, are folded beneath her. Shorts against her thighs.

"Here they are!"

She drops them between her and me. I pick up the top one. A park. She's on a swing. Mouth wide, eyes squinted shut, neck wrapped in a brown scarf.

"I thought the swing was gonna break," she giggled.

Another picture. She's eating cotton candy. She likes cotton candy. Well, who doesn't.

Another picture. I'm holding a puppy. A dachshund. I don't have one. Is it hers?

Another picture. She's holding the dachshund. Must be hers.

"She likes you, by the way. That's saying something. She hates strangers," she said.

Another picture. She's lying on the hood of a blue car. Looks like a Saturn. Not my car.

Another picture. A little girl. Thick hair pulled in a ponytail. Wide smile. Missing tooth. God, who is this? Think, think! I know it's no use, though.

"She's cute," I say, holding the picture to her.

"I know, huh? You two looked so adorable playing with that hula-hoop."

Hula-hoop? Oh, God.

Another picture. Me with a hula-hoop around my knees. Saadia giggles.

"I have to pee, be right back," she says, patting my head.

When she turns the corner, I flip through the photos quickly. There has to be something. Give me a sign. Saadia



against a tree. Cars, buildings, streets, park – the background. Sun overhead. Its beams hit me even through the gloss of the picture. The sun grows brighter. Whiteness explodes from it, covering Saadia in the picture before me.

The whiteness becomes blackness. Though I've been lying in the dark for who knows how long, my eyes have to adjust to the night. A gentle snoring to my right. I turn and get a mouthful of hair. To my left, a nightstand. Whose apartment is this? I pick up the nearest object on the nightstand. I squint at it for a while until *Sensual Amber Body Lotion* becomes clear. Her apartment. I sit up on my elbows. Pants on the floor. Underwear on the corner of the bed. A breast peeking from the rumple of the blanket. I smile and pump my fist. I stare at her. She smiles in her sleep. I wonder what it was like. Oh, but I can still taste her. At least I have that. I lean down and study her through the darkness. She's very slender, delicate. Her long legs, splayed open. Is it how she normally sleeps or a result of whatever happened? Doesn't matter. I lean down over her and touch my lips to hers. She moans through her sleep.

“Mmm...again?”

“Mm hmm,” I answer.

Her arms, almost limp, rise up and curl around my neck. So natural, the way the elbows hook around the notches between my neck and shoulders. A kiss, lips to lips, our very first one, technically, spreads across our bodies. Our breaths quicken until the room brightens. No, no, no, please, no! Her hands move to my hips. Pulling. Not yet. Fingertips across my thighs...just a little...her thighs against my waist...while longer. She disappears into the white.

Her taste. Even in the whiteness.

I come back lying on my side. A living room. I don't recognize it. A television, my own, is on in front of me, but what is this other stuff? That lamp? Not mine. Those movies are mine. This couch? Long, creamy white leather. Yeah, it's mine. But this room? Unfamiliar. A picture frame on a shelf on the wall to my left. Saadia and I outside somewhere. Her wide, bright smile. Earrings dangling. Brown scarf around her hair.



"Hey, hand me that lotion, Rob."

I jump. She lays stretched out on the opposite end of the couch.

"Huh?"

"Gimme the lotion," she says, smiling.

I look around. The lotion's on the floor. Grab it. *For preventing stretch marks*, the label says. I hand it to her.

"Thanks baby."

She lifts up her shirt and rubs it on her stomach.

I follow her movements. Long slender fingers rubbing the stomach, tips tracing the curves. The white of the lotion slowly disappearing into her light skin. The hand stops.

"You know what I like about you?" she asks suddenly.

"No, what?"

"Sometimes, I catch you looking at me like it's your first time seeing me."

I look at the wide brown eyes that stare at me curiously from behind a square-framed pair of glasses.

"Is that a good thing or bad thing?"

"No. It's a good thing. Very cute."

She crawls to me. She lowers her face to mine and my hand instinctively touches her stomach. She presses her body to mine and lays her head against my chest.

"I love you," she says, smiling and looking at the television.

'I love you' feels like it should be my response, so that's what I say. The days are slow and the faces, always new. Time is unreliable, a realization that I have come to understand a long time ago. Her fingers trace her stomach casually as I stare down at her. I want to say 'I love you' and know why I'm saying it. I want to remember the reasons. I want to say 'I love you' after the whiteness rolls in and hear myself say it. And, as if on cue, the television goes white, filling the room, corner to corner, in its ivory wave.

"Robert, Robert, quick! Feel!"

My eyes shoot open.

"What, what?"

She grabs my hand and places it against her massive belly. I look down in shock. The faintest movement against my palm. I narrow my eyes. A thump. Another and another.



"She's kicking!" Saadia whispers through a wide smile.

I start to ask 'who', but I catch myself. She's excited. Am I? Somewhere inside of me, I know I am. I have to be. But...she? A little girl? What will she look like? Will she have Saadia's black curls? Or my fucked up mind? Will she ever walk around the world not knowing or trusting anything? Will she ever reach up to touch a face and not know what she's feeling? Will she ever lay eyes on a loving smile and not recognize it? Will she ever have a child and not ever know who it is? I feel a tear trickle down my cheek.

"Oh, honey!" she gasps, grabbing my head and pressing it to her chest.

I want to tell Saadia. But how do you explain something like that? I don't know where to start, but I need to start soon. Before the whiteness rises through the cracks of my mind and floods everything. Before the whiteness pours from the sky like the tumbling of a waterfall. Before the whiteness washes me away, quiet and absolute.

"Saadia?"

My voice is a whisper.

"Yes, baby?"

Hers, as well.

The floor disappears and our feet dangle above whiteness.

"No..."

Another tear drips from my cheek and falls through nothingness. Whiteness fills me.

Whiteness becomes blackness. Beams of light. Panicked, frantic breathing. I look around wildly. Air rushes all around me. Red lights, green lights, white lights, flashing all around me. Hands gripping a circle. A steering wheel. I look to my right. Saadia, hands clutching her massive stomach, her breath, jagged and uneven.

"Faster, Robert!"

I look up. Two circles of light, growing faster than I can comprehend. A scream. A pair of screams. A terrible grinding crunch. Squealing, dense and heavy all around me. The shatter-



ing of glass. In an instant, the darkness takes over. Not whiteness – darkness. I'm still here. Throbbing all over. Trickling. Tiny, continuous trickling all over. Nothing else moving around me.

To my right, a whisper, "Robert."

To my right, a whisper, "Robert, can you hear me?"

To my right, crying.

I can't answer. A hand against mine. Can't squeeze it, like I want to. Stillness all around me. Is this eternity?

My body is floating. Voices, undecipherable. Clattering, the invasion of my mouth, throat. A pinch on my arm. Relief.

A clattering to my right.

A voice, "Oh God, she's pregnant! We gotta go, now!"

A sharp, high wailing, piercing at first, but melodic after a while. Body rocking, side to side, rough, shaky.

"Come on, man, don't let her go."

Let who go?

Saadia?

Are you there?

I'm floating. A deeper darkness fills the already dark blackness that blankets me.

The blackness fades to grayness a lifetime later.

"How is the baby coming along?"

Baby?

"It was close, but she's fine."

Oh God, thank you! Saadia?

"Is she..."

A sigh.

Is she what?

Saadia?

The grayness is pushed by whiteness.

No, wait! Is she what? Not yet! Not yet! Not yet!

Saadia. Even in the whiteness.

Whiteness becomes an empty blue. The blue is the sky, cloudless and pale. In my arms, a sleeping baby. Around me, headstones, rowed like dominoes. Gray squares of stone, jutting from the ground, speckles of glass caught in the granite,



sparkling from the sun behind me. The one before me: straight sides, rounded top, dried, crunchy flowers lying on the ground in front. Next to the flowers, a brown, cashmere scarf. I don't know what it's doing here, though. My eyes fall on the words that mark the headstone.

Saadia Janelle Hall
1981-2007
Mother, Wife, Friend

"Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground."
Oscar Wilde

In my hand, a book. *The Collected Works of Oscar Wilde*. Hmm...I guess she liked this guy. I step forward and place it gently next to the dead roses and the scarf.

A gurgling sound. The child's round face, eyes wide and dark, stares up at me. A tuft of black curly hair pokes out of her wool knit hat. A pink sweater with a sheep on the front covering her tiny body. Little feet dangling by my stomach. Unfamiliar face. She lays her head on my chest, a feeling that feels warm, even in the stiff coldness of this strange cemetery. My face feels sticky. Dried tears. But, none are coming now. They should be. They *should* be. *Should*. Emptiness in my stomach, in my chest, between my ears. Emptiness out here, in the middle of the dominoed tombstones. 'I love you.' I want to say it. So I do.

"I love you."

The words tumble from my lips, dead appropriately.

Saadia. Even in the emptiness.

A sudden rush of winter wind swirls around me. I clutch the child tighter to my chest. It feels right.

A thought hits me: the child's name, what is it?

I look around. My car, in the distance. Trees around me. Empty November sky. The child looks up at me, toothless smile, cheeks red with coldness. Whiteness begins pouring. White is the sky; white is the ground.

A gurgling sound. Even in the whiteness.



Whiteness bleeds black. My feet, bare, are cold against something smooth. All is dark. It's so hard to breathe! I reach up to my neck, feel something, some kind of cord, tied to my neck. I follow it up. Tied to the shower head. What the fuck? An epiphany. No. I grab at my neck, tug at the knotted cord around my windpipe, pull it over my head. It's hard to breathe. Fear, this time. Was I really going to? I stand there, breathing deep, rapid breaths. Was I really going to? What have I missed? I feel along the wall until I find the light switch. I flip it. Pictures cover the floor. Saadia. In a park, on a couch, in my arms. Saadia, her neck wrapped in a brown scarf. Was I really going to? I sit down on the edge of the bathtub. Pick up a picture. Saadia kissing my cheek. I feel nothing. So much I missed. Never got a chance to know her. Sort of, anyway.

A gurgling cry in another room.

A realization.

I follow the sound. I am led to room across the hall from the bathroom. I flip on the light. The child cries. I move forward and pick her up. Pull her close to my chest. Breathe deeply until she mimics my breaths and falls silent. A name. What is her name? I look along the walls. A birth certificate, framed. Denise Janelle Hall. Pretty name. She feels bigger. More beautiful. Tiny hands clutching my shirt. She's mine.

Was I really going to?

I hold her out so I can see her better.

"Hello, Denise. I'm Robert."

She sleeps. But she knows. I can feel it.

The whiteness approaches. Not yet. Fight it for a little longer.

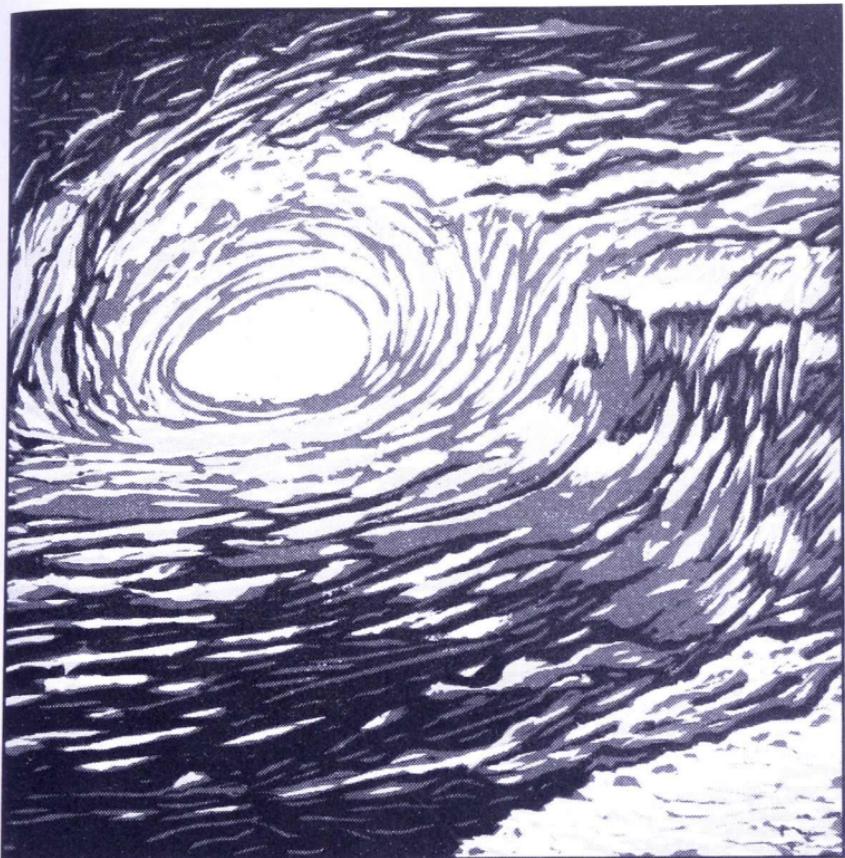
We will know each other. I will know her. I will love her. I hug her tightly. I feel a sigh trickle out of her infant throat. Tiny heart thumping pitter patters. The room grows white. We will know each other. "I love you." The words enter my mind with sincerity. I repeat her name over and over again as the whiteness covers us.

Denise. Even in the whiteness.



Untitled

Katarina Garcia



Pensive Boogieboarding

Reagan L. Grimsley



Understatement

Anna Dunson

This was just

When doodlebugs lived beneath a sun-scorched slide
that no one dared to challenge with bare thighs
When seeking paled in comparison to the hide
And I thrilled at picking out my father's silken ties

When Jeremiah was simply the name of some bullfrogs
who just so happened to be good friends of mine
When southern nights were too humid to sleep next to three
dogs
And I had yet to discover my own distaste for wine

When all I thirsted for were muscadines and scuppernongs
which tasted of nothing musky, but suckled on the vines of
honey
When singing *You Are My Sunshine* could right all wrongs
And I always knew, dear, how much only you loved me

A bushel and a peck, a bushel and a peck
And a hug around the neck



Silly Goofball Poets

John Phillips

I always hated Yeats.
Marianne Moore writes poems I like.
Langston Hughes was so full of soul, he burst,
and is bursting still.
Cummings has parentheses for eyebrows.
Sylvia Plath was the best sand castle ever.
Dickinson can see you from her window.
Gerard Manley Hopkins used all his names!
Walt Whitman is a mirror that only reflects himself.
Stevenson had a childhood made of paper.
Auden's face looks like it came ashore after many years of being
rolled by the sea.
Takahashi walked into the sea calmly.
John Milton makes me sleepy.
Ferlinghetti was incompatible with underwear.
Ezra Pound wrote haiku and never told.
John Donne raves on.
Elizabeth Bishop is a mossy tree.
Ambrose Bierce is Swift.
Blake is Blake.
Kerouac is.
Basho.
Roethke is a cross between Thurber and a shadow.
Shakespeare is a great cathedral, next to a bordello.
William Carlos Williams is outside, near the thresher.
Wallace Stevens has seen many blackbirds.
Wordsworth is too much with us.
Frost heated his house with snow.
Wendy Cope misses her cat, I think.
Issa wandered from tub to tub.
Robert Burns explored a drunken tao.
Jean Toomer's hands are dry with dirt.
Poe's hands are bloody.
Lord Byron was simply never drunk enough for this poem.
Marlowe is a ghost.



Gary Snyder's motorcycle still waits, in New Mexico. Tracks approach it, and fall away.

Brautigan approaches it, and leaves a note.

Percy Shelley thought himself Romulus.

Lewis Carroll hove scurly glabes.

Randall Jarrell washed out the plane.

Dante knows nothing of Hell.

Gwendolyn Brooks is real cool.

Eliot strolls.

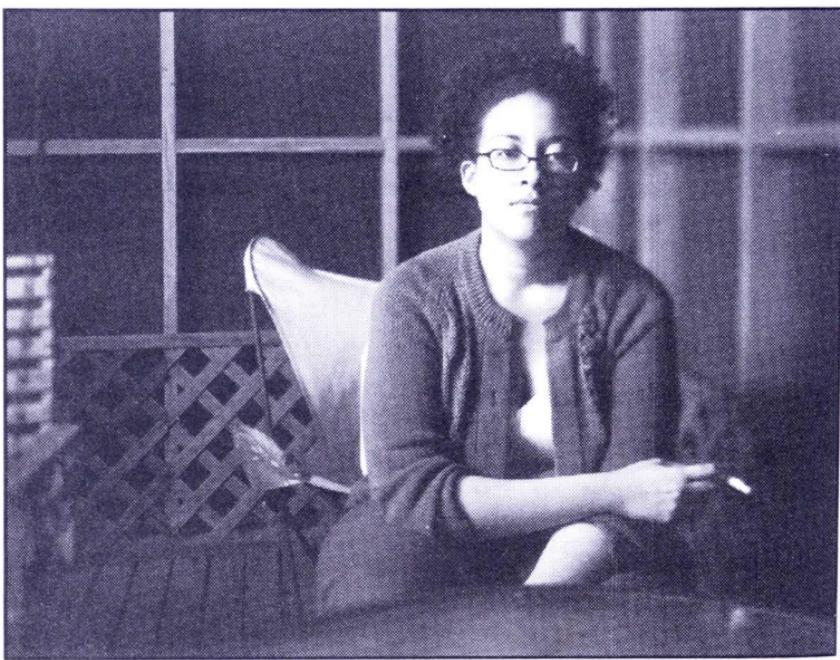
Longfellow rolls.

Coleridge rolls on and on.



Bianca

Justin Hadley



Neshama Kaddish

Erick Richman

I keep a lot in my pockets,
each filled to the seam with eons,
swelling across blue filligree,
resting gently in glassy bliss.

I keep a lot in my pockets,
always on me, transforming green,
beautiful and lined by furrows,
torn, wrinkled and twisted by time.

My pockets are deep.
And yes, I fill them.



Outmaneuvered

Crystal Jenkins Woods

Bland Thursday:
errands, red lights,
stale gum
unremarkable.

Complacency flutters after me
like a paper kite until
a hearse arcs into the road ahead
and something in me balks at this
procession. Without braking I

veer down a side street
past the high school, past
the house with the ferns
to the four-way.

Two blocks down
the black hood, the blue lights, the
yellow feeling.

At my urging the car strains
to twice the speed limit.
Fifty feet from the crossroads
the kite disintegrates,
its wooden frame in splinters as I fishtail

to a

stop in front of the motorcade.
I turn towards the hearse, towards the grim,
bearded face of Charon at the wheel and
under my tongue

I taste metal.

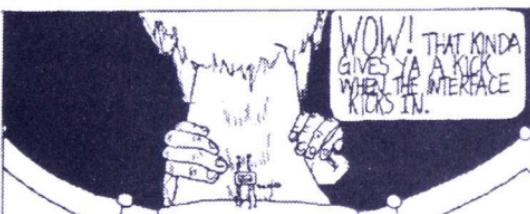
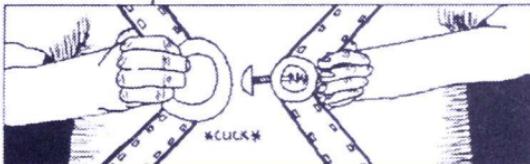
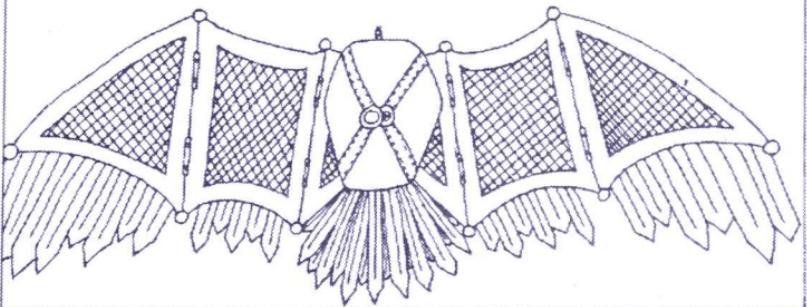


Lab Panel, Icarus Volume 1

Franklin Dillard II



WELL THESE WINGS DON'T LOOK TOO COMPLICATED TO FLY. I MEAN YOU HAVE UP/DOWN, LEFT/RIGHT AND FORWARD/BACK. I'LL JUST TEST THEM OUT MYSELF! I KNOW DAD SAID NOT TO USE THEM YET, BUT THIS WAY HE'LL HAVE SOME TIME FOR ME.



NOW I WONDER HOW YOU STAR—



I was drunk in New York City

Chelsea Bullock

Craving eggplant pizza.
My friends agreed, we left the bar,
walked down the street to the deli.

Its lights were off, the door was locked,
so we went to Mamoun's
and gorged on falafel.

"The best night of our lives,"
We all agreed.
But, secretly, as the words were said,
each of us thought
of another night in another town.

Even still, we clasped arms and
Waddled home, singing, swaying
tipping traffic cones.



geology 1121

Chelsea Bullock

flint, jasper, jet
coquina, chalk, micrite
diorite, gypsum, and scoria,
volcanos, shards of mineral and rock—

he says, “there’s no mystery in how it formed!”

swears at the whiteboard marker then
heaves it toward his pet granite by the door
hikes up his antique Levis—
sighs at his steel box of gems



Morpheus and the Fatal Dream

Erin King



Dishwasher

Shannon Williamson

A crashing like singing
Accordions of plates, pans, bowls
flying in his hands like cards
in a deck – other people swirl
around, he is conscious of them
but their noise is a language
and his noise is a stampede
the steam from the machine
like roads after hot summer rains
The skin on his hands is dough
Amphibious, he turns
from machine to the stacks
deafened by movement
slamming, crashing, whirring
nodding when needed
a child, an adolescent
looking up from his world
created in a five by eight space
with a rhythm and language he
understands



Oaks

Lauren Wertz

The limbs of tall oaks hang low over the street on either side.
Rays of orange pre-dusk light seep through
seams of dense leaves, and the summer air mingles and disturbs
their interlocking arrangement.

My son takes his bike every afternoon and flies down the sloping avenue.

He's a superhero parading the red cape I fastened to his blue shirt.
I yell at him to keep hands on the handlebars, feet on the pedals.
He likes to pretend he can fly.

Sitting on the curb next to the mailbox
I see a moving truck barreling down the road, and I signal my superhero
to pull over and wait. Together we watch and wave –
the driver makes a quick nod.

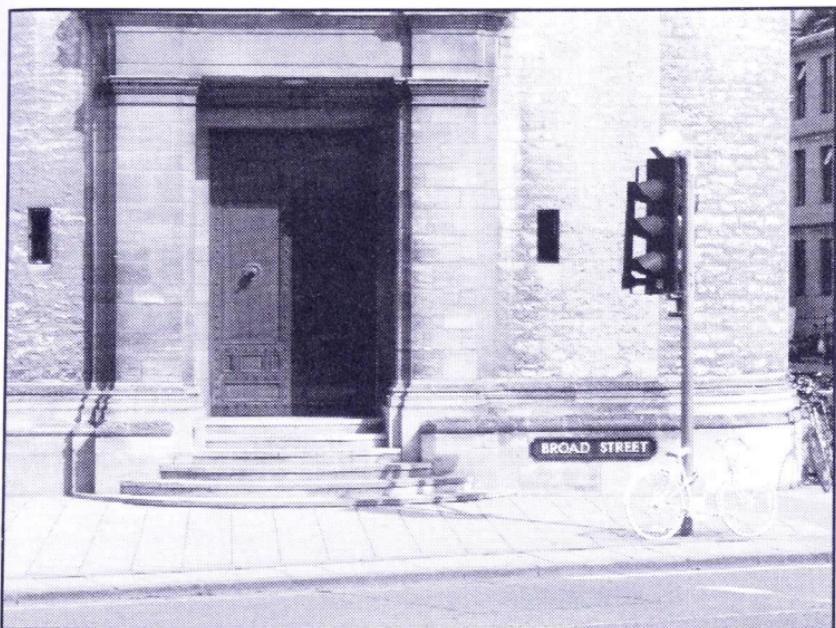
The tree limbs scrape the white metal top as the towering vehicle storms through the oak tree tunnel. Above our heads, emerald leaves fall, and a false autumn performs a pre-show in the glowing day.

It is unsettling, and far too soon to be enjoying such a sight.



Broad Street, Oxford

Lauren Wertz



Love Poem for Walter Anderson

Beth Spencer

Days when I'm desperate for wildness I sneak into the back
of your small skiff imagine the rocking waves all the way out to Horn
Island

and I'm free

of the false backlighting of my existence

We reach shore and they come to me: blue crabs
scuttling along the floorboards during morning coffee the
brilliant

colors of the migrating monarch lighting on the white
walls cracked ceiling

Turquoise and black tortoise

raking out sand onto the hearth

three primitive fish swirling in the lagoon of my living
room

My tiny house

an expanse of purewhite sand

You bring me this wildness without knowing

you lived it

years of sunburn on belly

scratched

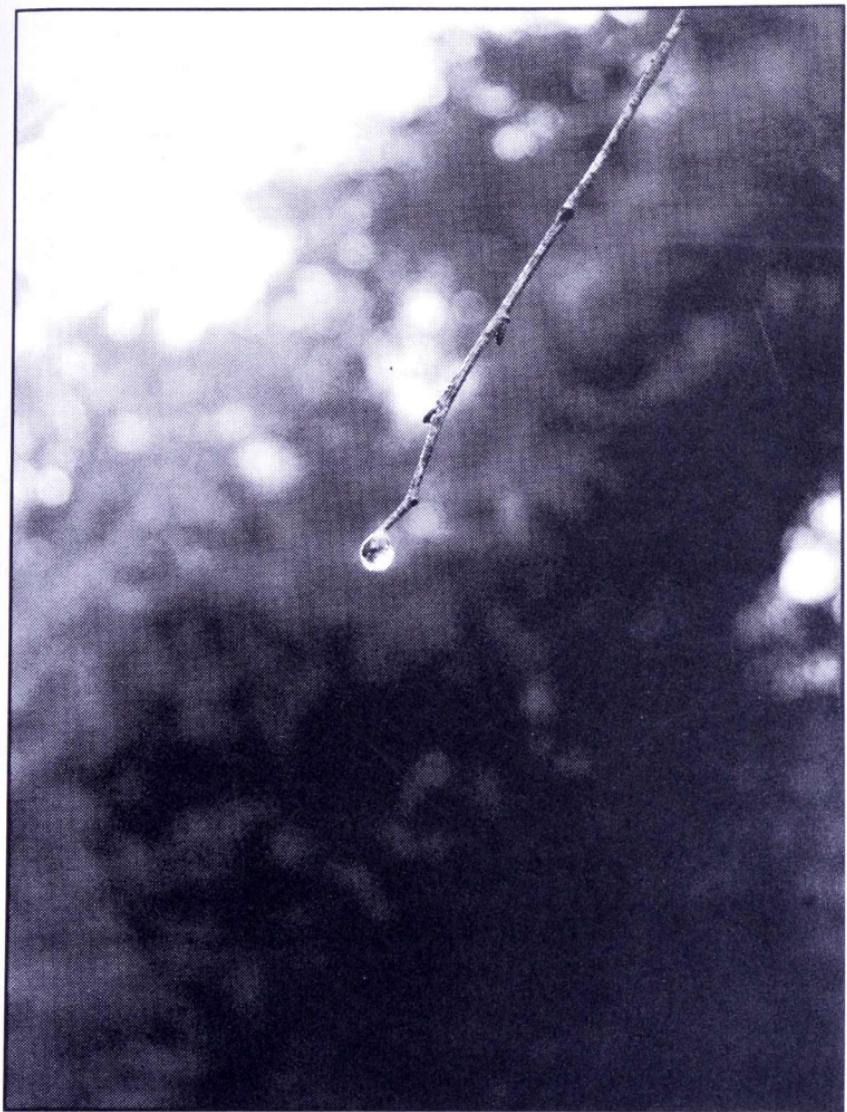
bitten

painting

on a canvas that moves out into time

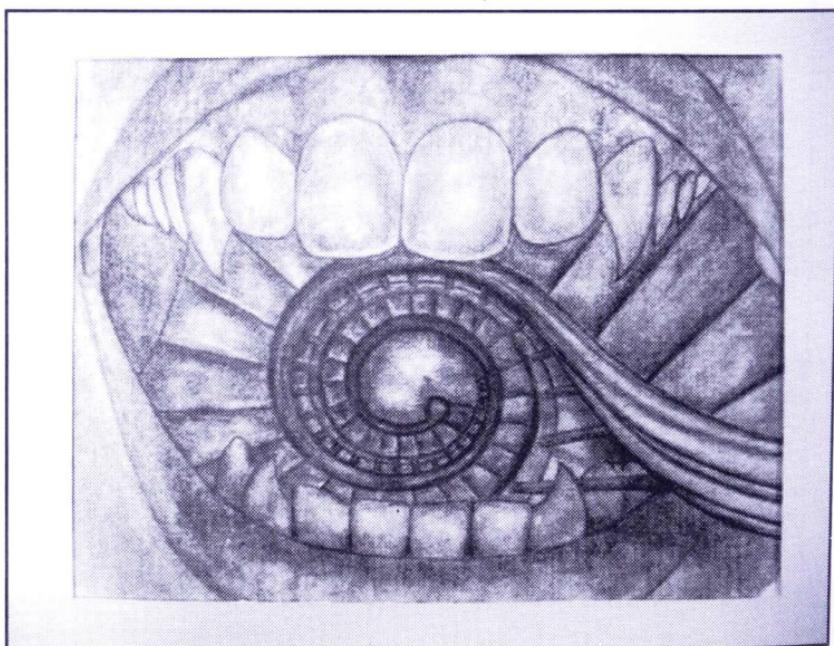


Orbis
Jenny Ross



Untitled

Holly Matthews



The Persistence of Vision

Lori Hinkley

Blink one

You are still here, smiling, and I am good enough

Blink two

You agonize the curve of my cheeks, the spin of my hair, the dark glow of my skin

Blink three

Your smile is slowly sliding from the corners of your mouth, I am too much, you know I am real

Blink four

You turn, but slowly, I see your shoulder turning away, my head tilts

Blink five

Your back, it is winter in my eye, and I am still here

Blink six

A still frame, and you are walking away

Blink seven

The image of you leaving will be burned into my memory for twenty-five years

Blink eight

I understand iconic memory, but only as it applies to us

Blink nine

You have reached the vanishing point, and you are so small against everything else,
though I know better

Blink ten

There is still much to see, but nothing is moving, and I have hell to face without you

Blink eleven

Nothing

Blink twelve

Nothing

Blink thirteen

I am turning, and the sky is turning, and the clouds are not in a freeze frame, and I am sick

Blink fourteen

We walk away, she carrying me close to her breast, and me...still here after all.



L'Enfant du Monde

Willy Pace

I would like to hold your love
In hand
Away from rain, snow, fire, and hail,
And man
But that love would do
No more
It would have me more than
You sore

I would like to hold your love
In hand
Away from the wind, and war
And gore
I would slay the fiercest demons for you
If I could
But it would do our love no good shelter –
It should

I am just, a mere man –
Understand
And like the egg-less beaches and waterfalls dry, peace abide,
And strife will die,
I can too wish that I could hold your love
In hand
And it would not crumble our love and truth from rocks
To sand

And, our love would be an expanse so grand
My sweetest blossom child of this Earthly land



DOF
Neal Jordan



Untitled

Justin Hadley



Nostalgia

Kristin Taylor

There's always some poetry lover,
A real brain of a student,
Who ends up on the doorstep
Of an old, closed-down bookstore,
Lost without the pages once sold inside,
For an obsession so deep
is not easily diverted.

Neither is his heart away
From the him he solely longs to touch,
Nor from the symphonies, art, literature
Filling the void of the he who has left him.

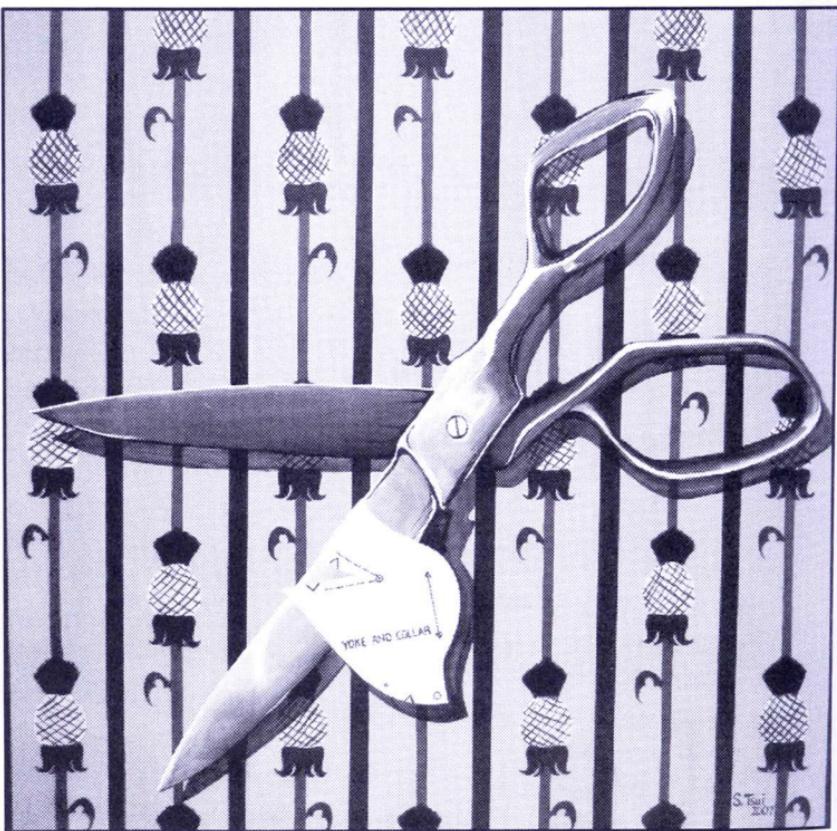
At times, I'd like to think I lost you to Beethoven
When he beckoned the union of friends beneath God or
Monet when he painted the impression of sunrise or
Whitman when he sang the song of himself.
But I know better.

I lost you to a river,
Cold, dark, Bostonian –
Greater than the song I sing of myself,
longing for you,
Greater than the song you sing of yourself,
longing for him to touch you again and
the bookstore that closed down yesterday.



Pinkie

Stacy Tsui



Death in Manhattan

Jessica R. McCallister

Manhattan has a certain prestige, an untouchable presence about it. All I knew of the island was a collection of stereotypes: people are rude, everything is exorbitantly expensive, crime is rampant, and the subway is for social rejects. To a foreigner – one who has no knowledge of the true city – these stereotypes are frightening, but contemplating my month-long immersion I wondered why people choose to live there if, as everyone says, it's a dirty, awful place. And at this point I hadn't necessarily pondered my own reasons for going. All I knew was that to many people, the "city that never sleeps" is a mirage, a blurry ideal of success, of power, of beauty. And I wanted to see it, wanted to see what the fuss was about. It had to be that the island, so cramped, had something to offer, something sublimely unique that holds the power to constantly drive people to it. Perhaps it's that no one can die in Manhattan.

Well, okay, you can die there. You just can't stay.

Because of overcrowding and land development, the Common Council of New York City prohibited further Manhattan burials in 1852. It's shocking when pondering the sheer number of people who have populated the island in the past one-hundred-and-fifty-plus years. Millions of people have to go somewhere after they die, right?

The thing about New York is, you don't notice the lack of cemeteries. I, in fact, didn't notice until the reality was forced upon me.

One strangely chilly and overcast Sunday, I decided to see Coney Island. I walked my usual route to the West 4th Street subway station, boarded the F train (which was practically empty), and settled in for the ride. Subway trains are uncomfortable to say the least. The plastic orange and yellow seats, molded curiously into the shape of human bottoms to cup people inside, offer no comfort whatsoever. Instead of lying across a three-passenger row of seats – where the plastic valleys and crests would poke into four separate parts of my body – I sat upright, watching the passing suburbs.



Most of the view was a blur of single family homes and ten-story apartment buildings, the occasional rotting factory, and a sprawling bulk store or two. But at one point on the elevated rail, the train stopped, the doors opened, and death seeped inside.

Below us flowed a sea of stone. The demographics of it were impalpable. Headstones – no, majestic grave markers rising towards the sky – stood shoulder to shoulder, inches between their solid stances, their foundations mere feet from the next row. The granite field stretched for what seemed to be miles, and in the distance the Verrazano Bridge stood quietly, solemnly.

Looking out the open doors was surreal. The track seemed nonexistent and I felt as though I was hovering above the graveyard. I thought immediately, *take a picture...no one will believe this*, but the doors began to close, and the train sped off.

It was then that I noticed Manhattan's dearth of final resting places. After talking to fellow travelers, they had the same revelation. Maybe it's the lack of green space, the overabundance of concrete and asphalt (although there are vastly more parks and splotches of grass than I'd imagined). Or perhaps it's the life of the city; it constantly bustles. No one thinks about death because they don't have time to.

Manhattan – in fact – is the antithesis of death. With the constant rush of life and economy, there is no time to worry about future events. Everything on the island continuously moves. Sitting in the parks, people constantly enter and depart. Music plays in different corners – violins, guitars, pianos, mandolins, tin cans. Singers pine for lost love and promises in hundreds of languages as people on lunch breaks rush past, sometimes stopping for a cigarette to listen to a Beatles cover group at Strawberry Fields or for a partial recital of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* in Washington Square Park.

Everywhere you go, things bustle. The streets are never quiet, always filled with buses, taxis, car services, and the occasional personal vehicle. The sidewalks are stamped with pedestrians, strollers, bicycles, and scooters. Watching a movie in the Angelika Film Center's basement theatres becomes a practice in concentration as rumbling begins in the distance, the seats begin



to shake, and a subway car rushes past at that very instant, shaking the screen just enough to be obvious, and rumbling just enough to sound like an action movie with the sound up too loud playing next door. No matter where you are in Manhattan, no matter how quiet the respite, how far away the location from the city streets, there are always reminders of the life that must continue for the city to function.

Perhaps, though, Manhattan serves as a different sort of home. Because of the inability to stay – either because of lack of income or eventual death – the island seems more like a college than a hometown. Inhabitants visit for a period of time, but once finished, they are shoved away, kicked out, and yet without the pomp of college graduation. After learning all they can and doing with that education good or bad, they must leave; there is a constant renewal of the population.

Manhattanites aren't from the island, usually; they've migrated from everywhere, all over the world and even, some might think, from other planets. (Don't believe me? Walk through the East Village after midnight.) What's amazing is that Manhattan has 87 funeral homes and yet the bodies prepared for burial can't, in fact, even be buried there. It's like that saying, "You don't have to go home but you can't stay here."

Perhaps the funeral homes exist to keep up an image. Manhattan inhabitants have fought their way to the island, fought to make a name for themselves, fought to survive, and dying won't bump them off the prime piece of real estate. Where they ultimately go doesn't much matter; it's the fact that they spent their lives in the rush of the city and that they want their last hurrah – the viewing – to occur where they *chose* to live, not where they *had* to.

To most people, the outer boroughs of New York City are minor and less important boroughs when compared to Manhattan. *Those* places are where all the poor people go, it's believed. Visit Manhattan, make money there, but live where it's affordable. (Which, in fact, is a complete misnomer; the outer boroughs are insanely expensive, just slightly less so than Manhattan.) Because of the stereotypes, Manhattan is idealized as prime rib, while Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island



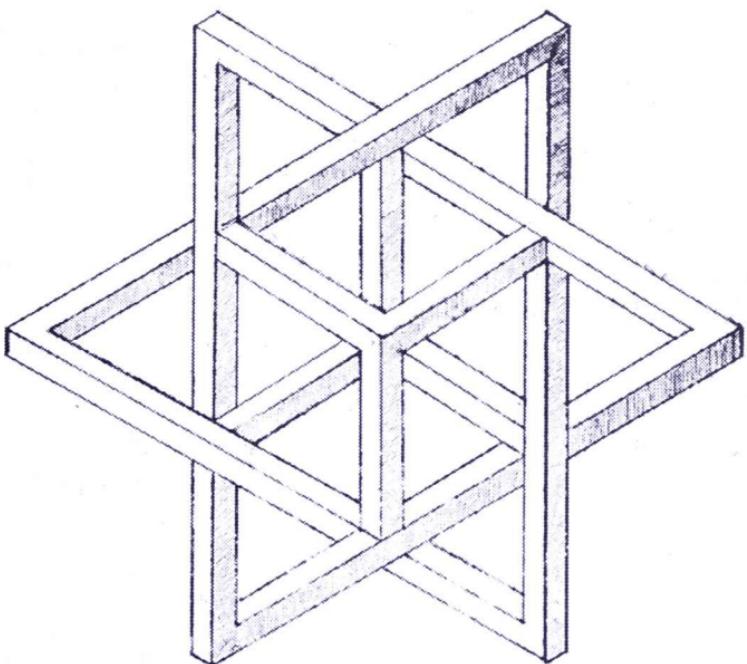
are measly mutton.

The island is cruel, cutting up and spitting out failed attempts at habitation. Having a Manhattan address is prestigious; if you can't live in Manhattan, you may as well be living in Kansas. It is interesting, then, to realize that everyone who makes it in Manhattan will inevitably be thrown out. Perhaps it's some sort of retribution for those who've fought to make it but never succeeded.

Leaving New York, I sat comfortably with the understanding that, like most stereotypes, those of the city were mostly false. The people were friendly and helpful, I was never assaulted (although a few "Hey Blondie's" were yelled my way), and the subway was an efficient and cheap mode of transportation easily conquered after a few rides. Most everything besides the subway was, however, exorbitantly expensive. Manhattan was every bit the image of success, power, and beauty I'd imagined it to be. I knew what the fuss was about; the island is magnificent in its beauty and complexity. No matter how harsh its surface, it will always be the Mecca for those seeking the American dream. Manhattan's purpose is not to keep people forever. It serves as a revolving door, constantly being reborn of new ideas and aspirations, and that – after all – is everyone's dream.

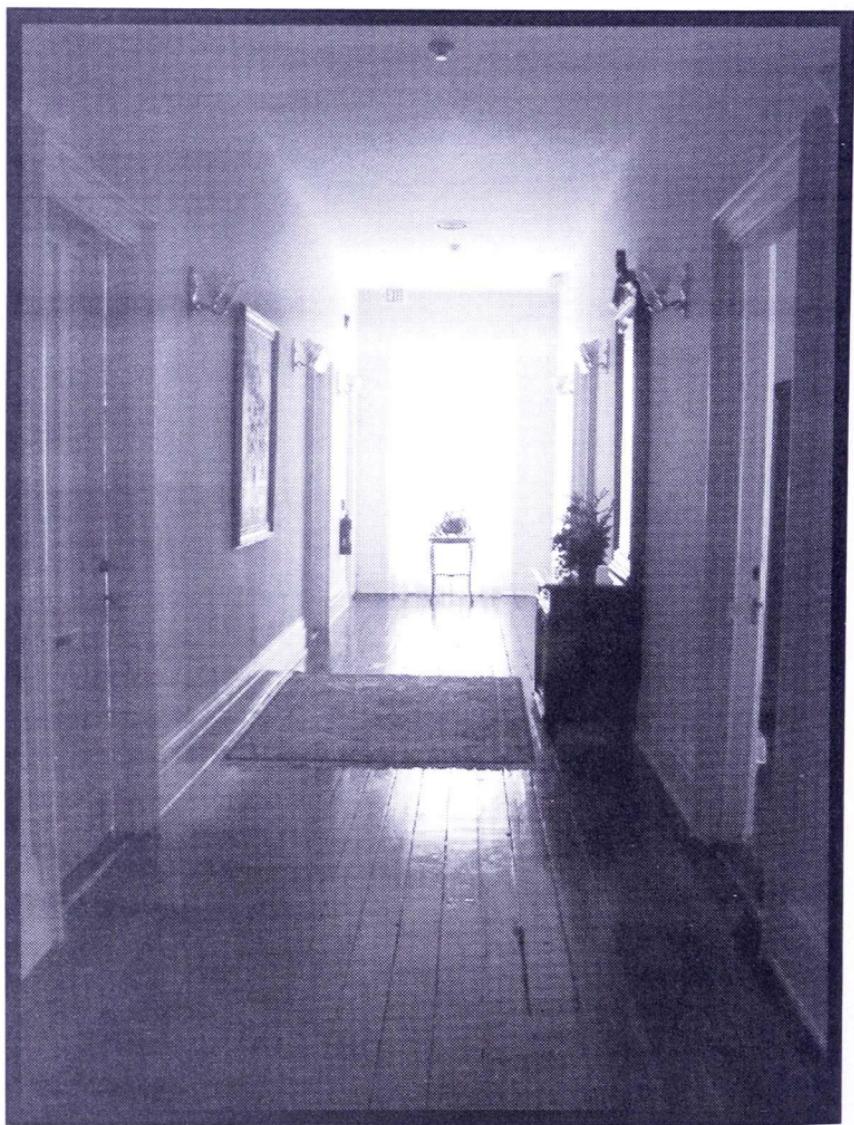


Dalivinci
Franklin Dillard II



Wedding Day

Matthew Farina



Connection

John Summerfield

Power's
syncopated rant and rave
Loud as thunderclap –

Pole wire caps
Alien faces.

Vibrations
Weather
Deteriorates to destruction.

The only signal
always behind.

Catching the picture. Running for cover –

The hum heard, then thunder –
Then Silence, a new hum, and empty sounds.



First Aid

Sheena Baker

Your absence is a salted wound, scab torn,
revealing raw and tender meat beneath.
Like a child who's mesmerized, I can't turn
my gaze away; transfixed, I watch it weep.
I shudder from this reverie, grotesque
display of flesh; I will not come undone.
I disinfect with dry red wine and dress
the wound in angel hair. I've just begun
to breathe relief when I succumb to yet
another wave of angry heat. I try
a cup of coffee and a cigarette
before in numbing slumber I recline.
Dry-mouthed and choking on my remedies,
I wake to taste a keener agony.



Confederate Jasmine

Evelyn Nicole Kirksey



Shattered

Holly Matthews



Last Night I Went to Dinner

Crystal Jenkins Woods

Last night I went to dinner –
essays ungraded,
children's socks in the kitchen floor
 just where they'd dropped them
 where the sitter stood and waved me out
the water bill unopened
atop the coupons worth less than my time.
Laundry spilled out of the dryer
in a warm cotton avalanche
but I escaped.
Last night I went to dinner.



For Loreen, Who Now Lives in Her Truck

Beth Spencer

I'm tired of trying to forget about you, the dry skin
around your lips like nitre gathering at the edge of a terra cotta
pot. Your words: spoken more like pushing

breath through a clarinet than language. I mean, what if those
lips

released clear marbles as they once did, scattering them
on the children of The Juniper Tree so that I could

finally see them? Or puckered into a little o when you cough,
smaller than the waist of an hourglass? For a while you were
bus fare in a jar, a recipe for béchamel sauce. But there's

not even that anymore. You see, I've quit saying your
name completely. Let someone else lie awake with the drone
of cicadas and imagine you as something more than twisted

tines on a fork or a lame swallow. I give you the road,
its too-bright yellow lines
and a map that assumes you have no home.



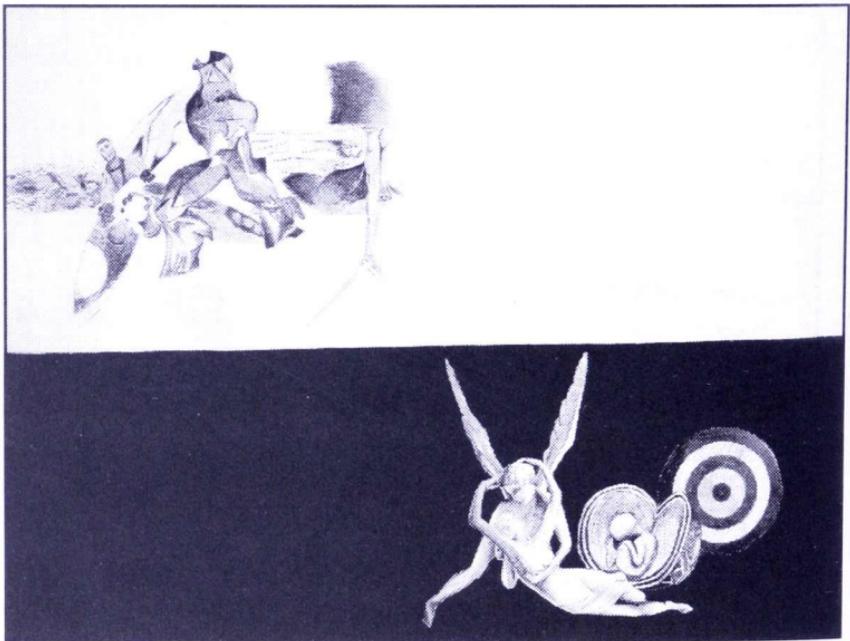
A Haunting Tour of New Orleans

Reagan L. Grimsley



Unity

Neal Jordan



Zen Gardens

John Phillips

The first time the place burned,
I was fifteen and awake enough
to wait outside,
vainglorious,
orange of eye,
to kneel amidst the ashes
and comb my blackened fingers
in their lunar surface.

I was reminded of that brown worm,
years ago, dragged in my hands
as I drew raking swirls in
the earth,
or of the trails of bicycle tires,
loose comets that helix in the dust.
I was now a swirl of dust,
I would be black smoke.

When I burned, my fingers tore jagged furrows
in the air.



To a Certain Nature Poet (Edward [Ted] Hughes)

John Summerfield

Forgiving as water may be
This conjuror mixed dreams of love with lust
Beside the shallow, brackish pond
Near the old mill, rusted and worn.
She will find you now, beneath her ground
Where wantonness be settled
Idle and waiting in middle earth, shouting
Versifications, once shared.



Icarus and His Odyssey

Franklin Dillard II



Counting on Death

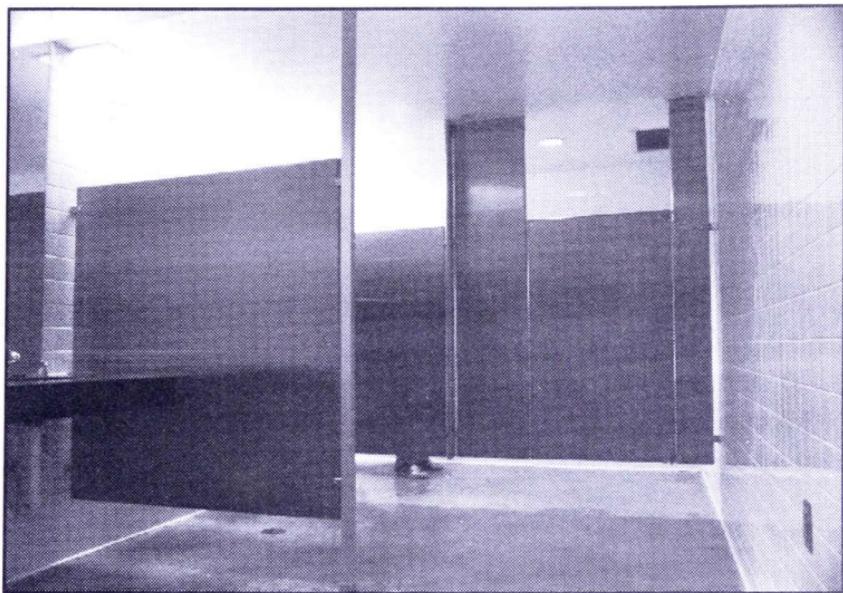
Lori Hinkley

Yesterday I
counted like sheep
how many more funerals
I should have to attend before I die.
I checked the closet to see how many
black dresses and skirts I have accumulated
And the heels, sandals and boots scattered across the floor.
My Grandfather is curled under a white knotted sheet in a nursing
home somewhere in the heart
of Texas. I have not visited him in a couple of years. My cousin
sent an e-mail last week:
Go see grandpa soon, it ain't lookin good. An e-mail I dropped
into the trash
folder, disgusted at how insensitive it mistakenly came across.
My stomach fell into a knot when I deleted it permanently.
That's one. He's a dab of patriarchal glue. When he is
gone, the rest will start to fall like dominoes.
There are at least seventeen more
funerals I am accumulating
black purses and scarves
for, but I can only
ready myself
for them
one by
one.



Bathroom

Justin Hadley



The Water Boils

Matt Conley

Like failing paint, chipping rhythmic
in strict marching
intervals showing slowly what
is underneath,
it is a fumbling brilliance that
only happens
when no one is looking. Then the
water boils.



You Can't Sleep through Every Storm

Matt Conley

I tried hard not to raise an alarm.
All I wanted was to close the curtain,
but you can't sleep through every storm.

When you slipped and we first lost our form,
I clung tightly to a word I found written in fleeing sand.
I tried hard not to raise an alarm.

I opened the door and found the mess on the floor.
I cleared the debris and heard your reasons,
but you can't sleep through every storm.

When morning pulled itself up, clean and warm,
it made me sweat and baked me thin.
I tried hard not to raise an alarm.

I watched you grope blind like a worm.
Your eyes writhed through a speech plainly spoken,
but you can't sleep through every storm.

And when the flood poured and it all came in a swarm,
your arm cramped and shrank when I showed my hand.
I tried hard not to raise an alarm,
but you can't sleep through every storm.



Editor's Letter

Columbus State University's art and literary journal – what we now know to be *Arden* – has a long and distinguished history. From the center-stapled 1962 *Rebel Resume* to the professionally-printed journal you see today, *Arden* has evolved along with CSU, seeing trends, students and faculty come and go. Throughout the years, we've produced a wealth of quality student, faculty and staff work campus notables have called a testament to the quality of CSU. *Arden* seems to leap forward with each volume. Here's to continued growth of *Arden*, and the continued support from CSU and the community.

Jessica R. McCallister
Editor-in-Chief, *Arden*
2007-2008

Correction

On an additional note, the Spring 2007 *Arden* included two poems which were mislabeled. "The Water Boils" and "You Can't Sleep Through Every Storm" are reprinted on pages 120 and 121 with their correct author.

Selections for publication in *Arden* are made by staff of CSU students and led by two faculty advisors.

All submissions are judged blindly, without regard to name, race, gender, or status as faculty, staff, or student. Editors are not given any identifying information about the works before all final decisions are made.

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